

THE POETICAL WORKS  
OF  
JAMES THOMSON

# LAST POEMS

VOL. II.



## A VOICE FROM THE NILE \*

I COME from mountains under other stars  
Than those reflected in my waters here ;  
Athwart broad realms, beneath large skies, I  
    flow,  
Between the Libyan and Arabian hills,  
And merge at last into the great Mid-Sea ;,  
And make this land of Egypt. All is mine  
The palm-trees and the doves among the palms,  
The corn-fields and the flowers among the corn,  
The patient oxen and the crocodiles,  
The ibis and the heron and the hawk,  
The lotus and the thick papyrus reeds,  
The slant-sailed boats that flit before the wind  
Or up my rapids ropes hale heavily ;  
Yea, even all the massive temple-fronts  
With all their columns and huge effigies,  
The pyramids and Memnon and the Sphinx,  
This Cairo and the City of the Greek

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As Memphis and the hundred-gated Thebes,  
Sais and Denderah of Isis queen ;  
Have grown because I fed them with full life,  
And flourish only while I feed them still.  
For if I stint my fertilising flood,  
Gaunt famine reaps among the sons of men  
Who have not corn to reap for all they sowed,  
And blight and languishment are everywhere ;  
And when I have withdrawn or turned aside  
To other realms my ever-flowing streams,  
The old realms withered from their old renown,  
The sands came over them, the desert-sands  
Incessantly encroaching, numberless  
Beyond my water-drops, and buried them,  
And all is silence, solitude, and death,  
Exanimate silence while the waste winds howl  
Over the sad immeasurable waste.

Dusk memories haunt me of an infinite past,  
Ages and cycles brood above my springs,  
Though I remember not my primal birth.  
So ancient is my being and august,  
I know not anything more venerable ;  
Unless, perchance, the vaulting skies that hold  
The sun and moon and stars that shine on me ;  
The air that breathes upon me with delight ;  
And Earth, All-Mother, all-beneficent,  
Who held her mountains forth like opulent breasts

To cradle me and feed me with their snows,  
And hollowed out the great sea to receive  
My overplus of flowing energy :  
Blessèd for ever be our Mother Earth.

Only, the mountains that must feed my springs  
Year after year and every year with snows  
As they have fed innumerable years,  
These mountains they are evermore the same,  
Rooted and motionless ; the solemn heavens  
Are evermore the same in stable rest ;  
The sun and moon and stars that shine on me  
Are evermore the same although they move :  
I solely, moving ever without pause,  
Am evermore the same and not the same ;  
Pouring myself away into the sea,  
And self-renewing from the farthest heights ;  
Ever-fresh waters streaming down and down,  
The one old Nilus constant through their change.

The creatures also whom I breed and feed  
Perpetually perish and dissolve,  
And other creatures like them take their place,  
To perish in their turn and be no more :  
My profuent waters perish not from life,  
Absorbed into the ever-living sea  
Whose life is in their full replenishment.

Of all these creatures whom I breed and feed,  
One only with his works is strange to me,  
Is strange and admirable and pitiable,  
As homeless where all others are at home.  
My crocodiles are happy in my slime,  
And bask and seize their prey, each for itself,  
And leave their eggs to hatch in the hot sun,  
And die, their lives fulfilled, and are no more,  
And others bask and prey and leave their eggs.  
My doves they build their nests, each pair its own,  
And feed their callow young, each pair its own,  
None serves another, each one serves itself ;  
All glean alike about my fields of grain,  
And all the nests they build them are alike,  
And are the self-same nests they built of old  
Before the rearing of the pyramids,  
Before great Hekatompylos was reared ;  
Their cooing is the cooing soft and sweet  
That murmured plaintively at evening-tide  
In pillared Karnak as its pillars rose ;  
And they are happy floating through my palms.

But Man, the admirable, the pitiable,  
These sad-eyed peoples of the sons of men,  
Are as the children of an alien race  
Planted among my children, not at home,  
Changelings aloof from all my family.  
The one is servant and the other lord,

And many myriads serve a single lord :  
So was it when the pyramids were reared,  
And sphinxes and huge columns and wrought stones  
Were haled long lengthening leagues adown my  
banks

By hundreds groaning with the strèss of toil  
And groaning under the taskmaster's scourge,  
With many falling foredone by the way,  
Half-starved on lentils, onions, and scant bread ;  
So is it now with these poor fellaheen  
To whom my annual bounty brings fierce toil  
With scarce enough of food to keep-in life.  
They build mud huts and spacious palaces ;  
And in the huts the moiling millions dwell,  
And in the palaces their sumptuous lords  
Pampered with all the choicest things I yield :  
Most admirable, most pitiable Man.

Also their peoples ever are at war,  
Slaying and slain, burning and ravaging,  
And one yields to another and they pass,  
While I flow evermore the same great Nile,  
The ever-young and ever-ancient Nile :  
The swarthy is succeeded by the dusk,  
The dusky by the pale, the pale again  
By sunburned turbaned tribes long-linen-robed :  
And with these changes all things change and pass,  
All things but Me and this old Land of mine,

Their dwellings, habitudes, and garbs, and tongues :  
I hear strange voices ; \* never more the voice  
Austere priests chanted to the boat of death  
Gliding across the Acherusian lake,  
Or satraps parleyed in the Pharaoh's halls ;  
Never the voice of mad Cambyzes' hosts,  
Never the voice of Alexander's Greece,  
Never the voice of Cæsar's haughty Rome :  
And with the peoples and the languages,  
With the great Empires still the great Creeds change ;  
They shift, they change, they vanish like thin dreams,  
As unsubstantial as the mists that rise  
After my overflow from out my fields,  
In silver fleeces, golden volumes, rise,  
And melt away before the mounting sun ;  
While I flow onward solely permanent  
Amidst their swiftly-passing pageantry.

Poor men, most admirable, most pitiable,  
With all their changes all their great Creeds change :  
For Man, this alien in my family,  
Is alien most in this, to cherish dreams  
And brood on visions of eternity,  
And build religions in his brooding brain  
And in the dark depths awe-full of his soul.  
My other children live their little lives,

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\* "and Nilus heareth strange voices."—*Sir Thomas Browne*.

Are born and reach their prime and slowly fail,  
And all their little lives are self-fulfilled ;  
They die and are no more, content with age  
And weary with infirmity. But Man  
Has fear and hope and phantasy and awe,  
And wistful yearnings and unsated loves,  
That strain beyond the limits of his life,  
And therefore Gods and Demons, Heaven and Hell :  
This Man, the admirable, the pitiable.

Lo, I look backward some few thousand years,  
And see men hewing temples in my rocks  
With seated forms gigantic fronting them,  
And solemn labyrinthine catacombs  
With tombs all pictured with fair scenes of life  
And scenes and symbols of mysterious death ;  
And planting avenues of sphinxes forth,  
Sphinxes couched calm, whose passionless regard  
Sets timeless riddles to bewildered time,  
Forth from my sacred banks to other fanes  
Islanded in the boundless sea of air,  
Upon whose walls and colonnades are carved  
Tremendous hieroglyphs of secret things ;  
I see embalming of the bodies dead  
And judging of the disembodied souls ;  
I see the sacred animals alive,  
And statues of the various-headed gods,  
Among them throned a woman and a babe,

The goddess crescent-horned, the babe divine,  
Then I flow forward some few thousand years,  
And see new temples shining with all grace,  
Whose sculptured gods are beautiful human forms.  
Then I flow forward not a thousand years,  
And see again a woman and a babe,  
The woman haloed and the babe divine ;  
And everywhere that symbol of the cross  
I knew aforetime in the ancient days,  
The emblem then of life, but now of death.  
Then I flow forward some few hundred years,  
And see again the crescent, now supreme  
On lofty cupolas and minarets  
Whence voices sweet and solemn call to prayer.  
So the men change along my changeless stream,  
And change their faiths ; but I yield all alike  
Sweet water for their drinking, sweet as wine,  
And pure sweet water for their lustral rites :  
For thirty generations of my corn  
Outlast a generation of my men,  
And thirty generations of my men  
Outlast a generation of their gods :  
O admirable, pitiable Man,  
My child yet alien in my family.

And I through all these generations flow  
Of corn and men and gods, all-bountiful,  
Perennial through their transientness, still fed

By earth with waters in abundancy ;  
And as I flowed here long before they were,  
So may I flow when they no longer are,  
Most like the serpent of eternity :  
Blessèd for ever be our Mother Earth.

*November 1881.*



# RICHARD FOREST'S MID- SUMMER NIGHT

## I.

THE sun is setting in pale lucid gold,  
From out that strange sweet green  
The heavens through half their lucid breadth unfold,  
Unfathomably serene.

The moon is risen, formless, vague and wan,  
Until the glory wane ;  
Less moon as yet than thin white cloud, whereon  
Young yearning eyes fix fain.

The splendour ripples on the broad calm bay  
Where still some white sails gleam  
Like sea-birds in the offing far away,  
Suspended as in dream.

The wavelets whisper on the soft sands wide,  
Soothing their thread of foam,  
The silver fringe of the advancing tide,  
Nearer and nearer home.

The hammers ringing on the building ships  
 Are ceasing from their chime ;  
 Our toils are closing in this sweet eclipse  
 Of tranquil vesper-time.

O day slow-dying in the golden west,  
 O far flushed clouds above,  
 O slowly rising moon, your infinite rest  
 Brings infinite longing love.

## II.

But what come forth with the dark,  
 With the dusk of the eve and the night ?  
 When the lessening sails of that single barque  
 Shall be wholly lost to sight,  
 And the latest song of the latest lark  
 Shall be mute in the mute moonlight.

All the stars come forth on high  
 Like spirits that cast their shrouds,  
 And the solemn depths of the darkening sky  
 Are filled with their radiant crowds,  
 And Hesper, lovely as Love's own eye,  
 Shines beneath purple clouds ;

And the maidens and youths on earth,  
 On the shores of the sands and the piers,

Like a sudden bountiful beautiful birth,  
 In the flower of their happy years,  
 With babble and laughter and musical mirth  
 Under the silent spheres.

With the silent stars above,  
 And the maidens and youths below  
 With their murmurs sweeter than voice of the dove,  
 By the calm sea's splash and flow,  
 All the soft warm air breathes bliss and love  
 In the sunset's after-glow.

For the burning hours are past,  
 And the toils of the day are done,  
 And the peace of the night is come at last,  
 And the moon succeeds the sun ;  
 And the pulses of Heaven and Earth throb fast,  
 All the thousands throbbing as one.

### III.

Oh, a myriad stars may shine,  
 But ever the one sole Moon,  
 The Queen of the stars and the night divine,  
 The Queen most fair and boon,  
 For her mystical shine is Love's best wine,  
 And her midnight Love's own noon.

I have heard that the smallest star  
 Is a much more mighty sphere,  
 Than the regnant moon in her silver car  
 That we love and worship here ;  
 But behold, the star it is faint and far,  
 While our moon is bright and near.

Let the star in its distant skies  
 Burn glorious and great,  
 A sun of life to the far-off eyes  
 In the planets that swell its state ;  
 But it sways not the tides of our seas as it rides,  
 Nor the tides of our human fate.

So, there on the shining sand,  
 And there on the long curved pier,  
 Fair ladies circle fulgent and grand,  
 Each in her proper sphere ;  
 But the sun so far is a little star,  
 While my Love is near and dear :

Is near and dear and bright,  
 The Queen of my Heavens above,  
 The pure sweet light of my darkest night,  
 My Lotus, my Lily, my Dove ;  
 And my pulses flow and thrill and glow  
 In the sway of Her splendid love.

## IV.

Farewell, fair margent of the sea,  
Fair city of the noble bay ;  
I seek my Love who looks for me,  
Not far away, not far away,  
Over the hill of wood and lea,  
And near that other bay adown  
The winding valley lone and lown.

The valley with its tethered kine,  
The orchard plots and fields of grain,  
So tranquil in the broad sunshine,  
More tranquil now the high stars reign,  
And tranquil most and most divine  
When over it comes floating soon  
The mystic splendour of the moon.

The cottage nestles sheltered well  
Among rich apple-trees, embowered  
In its side-nook of dimpled dell ;  
Roses and jasmine starry-flowered  
Clothe all its front ; the tide's long swell  
Sounds up the valley slow and calm,  
To ebb away a dying psalm.

Through clouds of delicate blossom white  
The red tiles burn with steadfast glow,

Or through green leaves and apples bright  
 And hoary stems a-slanting low,  
 When morning crowns the eastern height ;  
 The blue smoke quivering up the air  
 Its slender breath of household prayer ;

The sweet flowers flush and glow and yearn,  
 With wild bees humming in their bloom,  
 The lane comes winding like a burn  
 Through banks of golden gorse and broom,  
 And edged with grass and fringed with fern ;  
 The rapturous larks are singing high  
 In all the regions of the sky.

But that is day, these days of June  
 A-verging into hot July,  
 And this is night, more rich and boon,  
 Although its hours so swiftly fly :  
 O light of lovers, gracious moon,  
 My own Moon waits me full of love,  
 Brighter than all heaven's stars above.

## v.

Ere the road curves up through the shade  
 With its transverse moonlight bars,  
 While above in the leafy gloom of the glade  
 Hang the glittering fruits of the stars ;

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18 FOREST'S MIDSUMMER NIGHT

Let me pause for a moment and turn and look down  
Beyond all the villa clumps duskily brown,  
And beyond all the pale yellow lamps of the town ;

To the sea and the noble bay  
Lulled asleep in the broad moonshine ;  
To the shore where our youths and our maidens stray  
On the sands and the pier's long line,  
Like a swarm of bees that suspend their flight  
To gather the honey of love and delight  
In the heart of the azure-leaved Flower of the Night.

Like a swarm of buzzing bees  
Whose busy murmurs float  
On the wide-wafting wings of the southerly breeze,  
Merged into one vague note :  
They are drunk with the honey of love and of bliss,  
And they throb with the stars of the azure abyss,  
And the air is as soft as a tremulous kiss.

I shall find Her all alone  
At the wicket of garden and lane,  
Or out of the porch by the rose o'ergrown  
She will glide all flushed and fain :  
So gather your honey, you bees that swarm,  
I drink-in my nectar all golden and warm  
From a flower-cup the fairest in colour and form.

## VI.

Do I love you more for your own grand sake,  
Or more for the bliss you bring to me?  
You big black arms of the elms that make  
The little white arms cling to me.

Do I love you more for your own sweet sake,  
Or more for my heart's desire to me?  
You flowers of the night whose perfumes make  
The sweetest breath suspire to me.

Do I love you more for your own dear sake,  
Or more for the joys that rill through me?  
You nightingales whose voices make  
The dearest soft voice thrill through me.

Do I love you more for your own bright sake,  
Or more for the joys that stream on me?  
You stars of the heaven whose glances make  
The brightest moist eyes beam on me.

Do I love you more for your own dear sake,  
Or more for the bliss possessing me?  
You whispering waves of the sea that make  
The dear lips mute caressing me.



Do I love you more for your own pure sake,  
 Or more for the Heavens you declare to me?  
 You naked moon, whose splendours make  
 The soul of her pure love bare to me.

Oh, I love you all for your own love's sake,  
 And my love of my Love and her love to me,  
 Dear earth and sea and heavens that make  
 This life as the life above to me.

## VII.

She is not there at the rustic gate,  
 Nor in the garden, nor in the porch :  
 Lucy ! the hour is not yet late,  
 The moon, our this night's signal torch,  
 The beacon-fire of our heart's desire,  
 Over the wooded promontory  
 Shines on our bay in all her glory.

Good Father nods in his old arm-chair,  
 A-dozing over his evening pipe,  
 The old brown jug at his elbow there  
 Half-full of the old ale humming-ripe ;  
 For his work is done with the set o' the sun,  
 And he settles down content and placid,  
 Sweetness without one drop of acid.

And our little Mother upright sits,  
     Under her glasses glancing keen  
 And listening sharp as she knits and knits ;  
     Nothing unheard, nothing unseen ;  
*Her* work is not done with the set o' the sun,  
     And she never nods and she never dozes  
     Until her head in the bed reposes.

Or else the dear old couple play  
     Some game they have played this thirty year ;  
 Cribbage,—and how she pegs away !  
     Perhaps Don Pedro when I appear,  
 And Lucy and I must join and try  
     Which shall prove the more prompt and able,  
     Or youth or eld at the old oak-table.

But Lucy, Lucy, where is She ?  
     Not in the garden, not at the gate,  
 Not in the porch a-looking for me,  
     Not at the parlour-lattice in wait !  
 Can she sew or read and take no heed  
     How the stars are bright and the moon is  
         shining,  
     And I am without here longing and pining ?

O Lucy, Lucy ! can you dream  
     O'er the loves in a book with your own Love  
     near ?—

Do I love you more for your own pure sake,  
 Or more for the Heavens you declare to me?  
 You naked moon, whose splendours make  
 The soul of her pure love bare to me.

Oh, I love you all for your own love's sake,  
 And my love of my Love and her love to me,  
 Dear earth and sea and heavens that make  
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 And I am without here longing and pining ?

O Lucy, Lucy ! can you dream  
 O'er the loves in a book with your own Love  
 near?—

Out from the back-shade darts a gleam ;

Lucy is here ! Lucy is here !

Dancing light in her eyes of a wicked surprise,  
 White rose in her hair, red rose in her fingers,  
 How she hastens !—and how she lingers !

Oh, the smile of your mouth !—but I want my own  
 kiss !

Oh, the flush of your face !—but your head on  
 my breast !

Oh, the rose in your yellow hair fragrant with  
 bliss !

Oh, the rose in your hand by my own hand  
 caressed !

O dear form I enlace in this perfect embrace,  
 My Love all a-tremble with passion and  
 yearning,  
 While under my kisses the pure neck is  
 burning !

#### VIII.

Oh, how the nights are short,  
 These heavenly nights of June !  
 The long day all amort  
 With toil, the time to court  
 So stinted in its boon !

In winter brief work-days,  
Long rest-nights dark and cold,  
Dank mists and miry ways,  
Black boughs and leafless sprays,  
No sweet birds singing bold.

I find this order strange,  
And not at all the right ;  
Not thus would I arrange :  
May I propose a change  
In seasons, day and night ?

Cold days, warm nights, be long,  
Cold nights, warm days, be brief :  
Warm nights of scent and song,  
Nights long as love is strong,—  
Oh, Love should have relief !

Yet some days we would spare,  
Long days of love and rest,  
So long, so rich, so rare,  
When but to breathe the air  
Is to be fully blest.

When deep in fern we lie  
With golden gorse above ;

Deep sapphire sea and sky,  
 Ringing of larks on high,  
 Our whole world breathing love.

Long days of perfect rest !  
 Long days of infinite bliss !  
 Your head upon my breast ;  
 Possessing and possessed,  
 Dissolving in a kiss.

## IX.

Oh, how the nights are short,  
 These heavenly nights of June !  
 The long hot day amort  
 With toil, the time to court  
 So stinted in its boon !

But three or four brief hours  
 Between the afterglow  
 And dawnlight ; while the flowers  
 Are dreaming in their bowers,  
 And birds their song forego ;

And in the noon of night,  
 As in the noon of day,  
 Flowers close on their delight,  
 Birds nestle from their flight,  
 Deep stillness holdeth sway :

Only the nightingales  
Yet sing to moon and stars,  
Although their full song fails ;  
The corn-crake never quails,  
But through the silence jars.

So few brief hours of peace ;  
And only one for us,  
Alone, in toil's surcease,  
To feed on love's increase :  
It is too cruel thus !

Did little Mother chide  
Because our sewing dropped  
And we sat dreamy-eyed ?  
Dear Mother, good betide,  
The scolding must be stopped.

Dear Mother, good and true,  
All-loving while you blame,  
When spring brings skies of blue  
And buds and flowers anew,  
I come in with my claim !

I claim my Love, my Own,  
Yet ever yours the while,  
Under whose care hath grown  
The sweetest blossom blown  
In all our flower-loved isle.



The Spring renews its youth  
 And youth renews its Spring :  
 Love's wildest dreams are truth,  
 Magic is sober sooth ;  
 Charm of the Magic Ring !

## x.

As we gaze and gaze on the sleeping sea  
 Beneath the moon's soft splendour,  
 The wide expanse inspires a trance  
 Most solemn and most tender.

The heavens all silent with their stars,  
 The sweet air hardly breathing,  
 The liquid light of ripples bright  
 Wreathing and interwreathing.

The tide self-poised now at the full,  
 Scarce swaying, almost soundless ;  
 The sea between twin skies serene,  
 Calm, fathomless and boundless.

What specks are we in this vast world,  
 Our little lives how fleeting !  
 While star on star is throbbing far,  
 What matter two hearts beating ?

How many many million years  
Those living lights supernal  
Shone ere our birth on this small earth !  
Yet they are not eternal.

How many many million years,  
When we have passed death's portal,  
Those stars shall shine as now divine !  
Yet they are not immortal.

Deep as may be the deepest sea,  
Yet deeper is our love, dear ;  
Our souls dilate with bliss as great  
As all the heavens above, dear.

We float in dream until we seem  
With all these worlds revolving ;  
Our love intense, our bliss immense,  
Throughout the whole dissolving.

A calm profound and infinite  
Within us as without us ;  
Our pulses beat in union sweet  
With all the Life about us.

We are the whole World yet ourself  
By some divine illusion ;  
The I in Thee and Thou in Me  
By mystic interfusion.

Our soul-tides poising at the full,  
 Scarce swaying, tranced in glory,  
 Have reached the clime of timeless time  
 Amid the transitory.

We have not spoken now so long,  
 But mute in still caressing,  
 Without one kiss have breathed the bliss  
 Too perfect for expressing.

## XI.

Good night; good night! how truly hath been sung,  
 It is good night then only when the tongue  
 Need never say Good night;  
 When hearts may beat together till the morrow  
Dawns on long hours fulfilled of bliss not sorrow,  
 And eyes that close for darkness, frayed and stung  
 By the so less sweet light.

Good night; good night! I leave you to sweet sleep  
 And lovely dreams of love divinely deep;  
 May this be your good night:  
 My straining arms reluctantly surrender  
 Into the arms of sleep divinely tender  
 My Dearest thus, to safely surely keep  
 Until the morn shines bright.

Good night ; good night ! I leave you and go  
back

Into the silent city ; and, alack !

Can this be my good night ?

Yet Love, Bliss, Memory, radiant Hope are burning  
In brain all throbbing and in heart all yearning,

As moon and stars in skies that else were black  
With glorifying night.

Good night ; good night ! If parting when so  
brief

Is yet so bitter, what would be our grief

With Good-bye for Good night !—

Farewell ! for weeks, for months, for years, for  
ever !

Alas for Lovers whom the Fates thus sever !

Where can they look for comfort or relief ?

Oh, worse than mortal blight !

Good night ; good night ! for more than twenty  
hours !

The sleeping time of all the birds and flowers,

For whom it is good night ;

The waking time of all the sun's wide glory :

Ere yet the moon has crowned yon promontory

To-morrow evening, back to Eden's bowers

I come with swerveless flight.

30 FOREST'S MIDSUMMER NIGHT

Good night ; good night ! my Life, my Love, my  
Bliss !

But one more last embrace, one more last kiss,  
To sweeten sour Good night :

O dear Heavens, have her in your holy keeping !

O moon and stars, watch tenderly her sleeping !

O sun, thou regent of our World-abyss,

Awake her to delight !

*December 1881.*

# INSOMNIA

"Sleepless himself to give to others sleep."

"He giveth His beloved sleep."

I HEARD the sounding of the midnight hour ;  
The others one by one had left the room,  
In calm assurance that the gracious power  
Of sleep's fine alchemy would bless the gloom,  
Transmuting all its leaden weight to gold,  
To treasures of rich virtues manifold,  
New strength, new health, new life ;  
Just weary enough to nestle softly, sweetly,  
Into divine unconsciousness, completely  
Delivered from the world of toil and care and strife.

Just weary enough to feel assured of rest,  
Of Sleep's divine oblivion and repose,  
Renewing heart and brain for richer zest  
Of waking life when golden morning glows,  
As young and pure and glad as if the first  
That ever on the void of darkness burst  
With ravishing warmth and light ;

On dewy grass and flowers and blithe birds  
singing,  
And shining waters, all enraptured springing,  
Fragrance and shine and song, out of the womb of  
night.

But I with infinite weariness outworn,  
Haggard with endless nights unblessed by  
sleep,  
Ravaged by thoughts unutterably forlorn,  
Plunged in despairs unfathomably deep,  
Went cold and pale and trembling with affright  
Into the desert vastitude of Night,  
Arid and wild and black ;  
Foreboding no oasis of sweet slumber,  
Counting beforehand all the countless number  
Of sands that are its minutes on my desolate track.

And so I went, the last, to my drear bed,  
Aghast as one who should go down to lie  
Among the blissfully unconscious dead,  
Assured that as the endless years flowed by  
Over the dreadful silence and deep gloom  
And dense oppression of the stifling tomb,  
He only of them all,  
Nerveless and impotent to madness, never  
Could hope oblivion's perfect trance for ever :  
An agony of life eternal in death's pall.

But that would be for ever, without cure !—  
And yet the agony be not more great ;  
Supreme fatigue and pain, while they endure,  
Into Eternity their time translate ;  
Be it of hours and days or countless years,  
And boundless æons, it alike appears  
To the crushed victim's soul ;  
Utter despair foresees no termination,  
But feels itself of infinite duration ;  
The smallest fragment instant comprehends the  
whole.

The absolute of torture as of bliss  
Is timeless, each transcending time and space ;  
The one an infinite obscure abyss,  
The other an eternal Heaven of grace.—  
Keeping a little lamp of glimmering light  
Companion through the horror of the night,  
I laid me down aghast  
As *he* of all who pass death's quiet portal  
Malignantly reserved alone immortal,  
In consciousness of bale that must for ever last.

I laid me down and closed my heavy eyes,  
As if sleep's mockery might win true sleep ;  
And grew aware, with awe but not surprise,  
Blindly aware through all the silence deep,  
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Of some dark Presence watching by my bed,  
The awful image of a nameless dread ;  
    But I lay still fordone ;  
And felt its Shadow on me dark and solemn  
And steadfast as a monumental column,  
And thought drear thoughts of Doom, and heard  
    the bells chime One.

And then I raised my weary eyes and saw,  
    By some slant moonlight on the ceiling thrown  
And faint lamp-gleam, that Image of my awe,  
    Still as a pillar of basaltic stone,  
But all enveloped in a sombre shroud  
Except the wan face drooping heavy-browed,  
    With sad eyes fixed on mine ;  
Sad weary yearning eyes, but fixed remorseless  
Upon my eyes yet wearier, that were forceless  
To bear the cruel pressure ; cruel, unmalign.

Wherefore I asked for what I knew too well :  
    O ominous midnight Presence, What art Thou ?  
Whereto in tones that sounded like a knell :  
    “ I am the Second Hour, appointed now  
To watch beside thy slumberless unrest.”  
Then I : Thus both, unlike, alike unblest ;  
    For I should sleep, you fly :  
Are not those wings beneath thy mantle moulded ?  
O Hour ! unfold those wings so straitly folded,  
And urge thy natural flight beneath the moonlit sky.

“ My wings shall open when your eyes shall close  
In real slumber from this waking drear ;  
Your wild unrest is my enforced repose ;  
Ere I move hence you must not know me here.”  
Could not your wings fan slumber through my  
brain,  
Soothing away its weariness and pain ?  
“ Your sleep must stir my wings :  
Sleep, and I bear you gently on my pinions  
Athwart my span of hollow night’s dominions,  
Whence hour on hour shall bear to morning’s golden  
springs.”

That which I ask of you, you ask of me,  
O weary Hour, thus standing sentinel  
Against your nature, as I feel and see  
Against my own your form immovable :  
Could I bring Sleep to set you on the wing,  
What other thing so gladly would I bring ?  
Truly the poet saith :  
If that is best whose absence we deplore most,  
Whose presence in our longings is the foremost,  
What blessings equal Sleep save only love and death ?

I let my lids fall, sick of thought and sense,  
But felt that Shadow heavy on my heart ;  
And saw the night before me an immense  
Black waste of ridge-walls, hour by hour apart,

Dividing deep ravines : from ridge to ridge  
Sleep's flying hour was an aërial bridge ;

But I, whose hours stood fast,  
Must climb down painfully each steep side hither,  
And climb more painfully each steep side thither,  
And so make one hour's span for years of travail  
last.

Thus I went down into that first ravine,  
Wearily, slowly, blindly, and alone,  
Staggering, stumbling, sinking depths unseen,  
Shaken and bruised and gashed by stub and  
stone ;

And at the bottom paven with slipperiness,  
A torrent-brook rushed headlong with such stress  
Against my feeble limbs,  
Such fury of wave and foam and icy bleakness  
Buffeting insupportably my weakness  
That when I would recall dazed memory swirls and  
swims.

How I got through I know not, faint as death ;  
And then I had to climb the awful scarp,  
Creeping with many a pause for panting breath,  
Clinging to tangled root and rock-jut sharp ;  
Perspiring with faint chills instead of heat,  
Trembling, and bleeding hands and knees and  
feet ;

Falling, to rise anew ;  
Until, with lamentable toil and travel  
Upon the ridge of arid sand and gravel  
I lay supine half-dead and heard the bells chime Two ;

And knew a change of Watchers in the room  
Without a stir or sound beside my bed ;  
Only the tingling silence of the gloom,  
The muffled pulsing of the night's deep dread ;  
And felt an image mightier to appal,  
And looked ; the moonlight on the bed-foot wall  
And corniced ceiling white  
Was slanting now ; and in the midst stood solemn  
And hopeless as a black sepulchral column  
A steadfast shrouded Form, the Third Hour of the  
night.

The fixed regard implacably austere,  
Yet none the less ineffably forlorn.  
Something transcending all my former fear  
Came jarring through my shattered frame  
outworn :  
I knew that crushing rock could not be stirred ;  
I had no heart to say a single word,  
But closed my eyes again ;  
And set me shuddering to the task stupendous  
Of climbing down and up that gulf tremendous  
Unto the next hour-ridge beyond Hope's farthest ken.

Men sigh and plain and wail how life is brief :

Ah yes, our bright eternities of bliss  
Are transient, rare, minute beyond belief,

Mere star-dust meteors in Time's night-abyss ;

Ah no, our black eternities intense

Of bale are lasting, dominant, immense,

As Time which is their breath ;

The memory of the bliss is yearning sorrow,

The memory of the bale clouds every morrow

Darkening through nights and days unto the night  
of Death.

No human words could paint my travail sore

In the thick darkness of the next ravine,

Deeper immeasurably than that before ;

When hideous agonies, unheard, unseen,

In overwhelming floods of torture roll,

And horrors of great darkness drown the soul,

To be is not to be

In memory save as ghastliest impression,

And chaos of demoniacal possession. . . .

I shuddered on the ridge, and heard the bells  
chime Three.

And like a pillar of essential gloom,

Most terrible in stature and regard,

Black in the moonlight filling all the room

The Image of the Fourth Hour, evil-starred,

Stood over me ; but there was Something more,  
Something behind It undiscerned before,  
    More dreadful than Its dread,  
Which overshadowed it as with a fateful  
Inexorable fascination hateful,—  
A wan and formless Shade from regions of the dead.

I shut my eyes against that spectral Shade,  
    Which yet allured them with a deadly charm,  
And that black Image of the Hour, dismayed  
    By such tremendous menacing of harm ;  
And so into the gulf as into Hell ;  
Where what immeasurable depths I fell,  
    With seizures of the heart  
Whose each clutch seemed the end of all pulsation,  
And tremors of exanimate prostration,  
Are horrors in my soul that never can depart.

If I for hope or wish had any force,  
    It was that I might rush down sharply hurled  
From rock to rock until a mangled corse  
    Down with the fury of the torrent whirled,  
The fury of black waters and white foam,  
To where the homeless find their only home,  
    In the immense void Sea,  
Whose isles are worlds, surrounding, unsur-  
    rounded,  
Whose depths no mortal plummet ever sounded,  
Beneath all surface storm calm in Eternity.

Such hope or wish was as a feeble spark,  
A little lamp's pale glimmer in a tomb,  
To just reveal the hopeless deadly dark  
And wordless horrors of my soul's fixed doom :  
Yet some mysterious instinct obstinate,  
Blindly unconscious as a law of Fate,  
Still urged me on and bore  
My shattered being through the unfear'd peril  
Of death less hateful than the life as sterile :  
I shuddered on the ridge, and heard the bells chime  
Four.

The Image of that Fifth Hour of the night  
Was blacker in the moonlight now aslant  
Upon its left than on its shrouded right ;  
And over and behind It, dominant,  
The shadow not Its shadow cast its spell,  
Most vague and dim and wan and terrible,  
Death's ghastly aureole,  
Pregnant with overpowering fascination,  
Commanding by repulsive instigation,  
Despair's envenomed anodyne to tempt the Soul.

I closed my eyes, but could no longer keep  
Under that Image and most awful Shade,  
Supine in mockery of blissful sleep,  
Delirious with such fierce thirst unallayed ;

Of all worst agonies the most unblest  
Is passive agony of wild unrest :  
    Trembling and faint I rose,  
And dressed with painful efforts, and descended  
With furtive footsteps and with breath suspended,  
And left the slumbering house with my unslumber-  
    ing woes.

Constrained to move through the unmoving hours,  
    Accurst from rest because the hours stood still ;  
Feeling the hands of the Infernal Powers  
    Heavy upon me for enormous ill,  
Inscrutable intolerable pain,  
Against which mortal pleas and prayers are vain,  
    Gasps of dying breath,  
And human struggles, dying spasms yet vainer :  
Renounce defence when Doom is the Arraigner ;  
Let impotence of Life subside appeased in Death.

I paced the silent and deserted streets  
    In cold dark shade and chillier moonlight grey ;  
Pondering a dolorous series of defeats  
    And black disasters from life's opening day,  
Invested with the shadow of a doom  
That filled the Spring and Summer with a gloom  
    Most wintry bleak and drear ;  
Gloom from within as from a sulphurous censer  
    Making the glooms without for ever denser,  
To blight the buds and flowers and fruitage of my year.



Against a bridge's stony parapet

I leaned, and gazed into the waters black ;

And marked an angry morning red and wet

Beneath a livid and enormous rack

Glare out confronting the belated moon,

Huddled and wan and feeble as the swoon

Of featureless Despair :

When some stray workman, half-asleep but lusty,

Passed urgent through the rain pour wild and gusty,

I felt a ghost already, planted watching there.

As phantom to its grave, or to its den

Some wild beast of the night when night is  
sped,

I turned unto my homeless home again

To front a day only less charged with dread

Than that dread night ; and after day, to front

Another night of—what would be the brunt ?

I put the thought aside,

To be resumed when common life unfolded

In common daylight had my brain remoulded ;

Meanwhile the flaws of rain refreshed and fortified.

The day passed, and the night ; and other days,

And other nights ; and all of evil doom ;

The sun-hours in a sick bewildering haze,

The star-hours in a thick enormous gloom,

With rending lightnings and with thunder-knells ;  
The ghastly hours of all the timeless Hells :—  
    Bury them with their bane !  
I look back on the words already written,  
And writhe by cold rage stung, by self-scorn  
    smitten,  
'They are so weak and vain and infinitely inane. . . .

“ How from those hideous Malebolges deep  
    I ever could win back to upper earth,  
Restored to human nights of blessed sleep  
    And healthy waking with the new day's birth? ”—  
How do men climb back from a swoon whose  
    stress,  
Crushing far deeper than all consciousness,  
    Is deep as deep death seems ?  
Who can the steps and stages mete and number  
    By which we re-emerge from nightly slumber?—  
Our poor vast petty life is one dark maze of dreams.

*March 1882.*

## HE HEARD HER SING

We were now in the midmost Maytime, in the  
full green flood of the Spring,  
When the air is sweet all the daytime with the  
blossoms and birds that sing ;  
When the air is rich all the night, and richest of  
all in its noon  
When the nightingales pant the delight and keen  
stress of their love to the moon ;  
When the almond and apple and pear spread  
wavering wavelets of snow  
In the light of the soft warm air far-flushed with  
a delicate glow ;  
When the towering chestnuts uphold their masses  
of spires red or white,  
And the pendulous tresses of gold of the slim  
laburnum burn bright,  
And the lilac guardeth the bowers with the gleam  
of a lifted spear,  
And the scent of the hawthorn flowers breathes  
all the new life of the year,

And the linden's tender pink bud by the green  
of the leaf is o'errun,  
And the bronze-beech shines like blood in the  
light of the morning sun,  
And the leaf-buds seem spangling some network  
of gossamer flung on the elm,  
And the hedges are filling their fretwork with  
every sweet green of Spring's realm ;  
And the flowers are everywhere budding and  
blowing about our feet,  
The green of the meadows star-studding and the  
bright green blades of the wheat.

An evening and night of song. For first when I  
left the town,  
And took the lane that is long and came out on  
the breeze-swept down,  
The sunset heavens were all ringing wide over  
the golden gorse  
With the skylarks' rapturous singing, a revel of  
larks in full force,  
A revel of larks in the raptures surpassing all  
raptures of Man,  
Who ponders the blessings he captures and finds  
in each blessing some ban.  
And then I went on down the dale in the light of  
the afterglow,  
In that strange light green and pale and serene  
and pathetic and slow

In its fading round to the north, while the light of  
the unseen moon

From the east comes brightening forth an ever-  
increasing boon.

And there in the cottage my Alice, through the  
hours so short and so long,

Kept filled to the brim love's chalice with the wine  
of music and song :

And first with colossal Beethoven, the gentlest  
spirit sublime

Of the harmonies interwoven, Eternity woven with  
Time ;

Of the melodies slowly and slowly dissolving away  
through the soul,

While it dissolves with them wholly and our being  
is lost in the Whole ;

As gentle as Dante the Poet, for only the lulls of  
the stress

Of the mightiest spirits can know it, this ineffable  
gentleness :

And then with the delicate tender fantastic  
dreamer of night,

Whose splendour is starlike splendour and his light  
a mystic moonlight,

Nocturn on nocturn dreaming while the mind  
floats far in ' the haze

And the dusk and the shadow and gleaming of a  
realm that has no days :

And then she sang ballads olden, ballads of love  
and of woe,  
Love all burningly golden, grief with heart's-blood  
in its flow ;  
Those ballads of Scotland that thrill you, keen  
from the heart to the heart,  
Till their pathos is seeming to kill you, with an  
exquisite bliss in the smart.

And then we went out of the valley and over the  
spur of the hill,  
And down by a woodland alley where the sprinkled  
moonlight lay still ;  
For the breeze in the boughs was still and the  
breeze was still in the sprays,  
And the leaves had scarcely a thrill in the stream  
of the silver rays,  
But looked as if drawn on the sky or etched with  
a graver keen,  
Sharp shadows thrown from on high deep out of  
the azure serene :  
And a certain copse we knew, where never in  
Maytime fails,  
While the night distils sweet dew, the song of the  
nightingales :  
And there together we heard the lyrical drama of love  
Of the wonderful passionate bird which swelleth the  
heart so above

All other thought of this life, all other care of this  
earth,  
Be it of pleasure or strife, be it of sorrow or  
mirth,  
Saving the one intense imperious passion supreme  
Kindling the soul and the sense, making the world  
but a dream,  
The dream of an aching delight and a yearning afar  
and afar,  
While the music thrills all the void night to the  
loftiest pulsating star :—  
“ Love, love only, for ever ; love with its torture and  
bliss ;  
All the world’s glories can never equal two souls in  
one kiss.”

And when I had bidden farewell to my Love at the  
cottage door,  
For a night and a day farewell, for a night and a day  
and no more,  
I went down to the shining strand of our own be-  
loved bay,  
To the shore of soft white sand caressed by the pure  
white spray,  
In the arms of the hills serene, clothed from the  
base to the crest  
With garments of manifold green, curving to east  
and to west ;

And high in the pale blue south where the clouds  
were white as wool,  
Over the little bay-mouth the moon shone near the  
full ;  
And I walked by the waves' soft moan, for my heart  
was beyond control,  
And I needed to be alone with the night and my  
love and my soul,  
And I could not think of sleep in the moonlight  
broad and clear,  
For a music solemn and deep filled all my spirit's  
sphere,  
A music interwoven of all that night I had heard,  
From the music of mighty Beethoven to the song of  
the little brown bird.

And thus as I paced the shore beneath the azure  
abyss,  
And my soul thrilled more and more with a yearning  
and sadness of bliss,  
A voice came over the water from over the eastern  
cape,  
Like the voice of some ocean daughter wailing a  
lover's escape,—  
A voice so plaintive and distant, as faint as a  
wounded dove,  
Whose wings are scarcely resistant to the air be  
neath and above,



Wavering, panting, urging from the farthest east to  
the west,  
Over some wild sea surging in the hope forlorn of  
its nest ;  
A voice that quivered and trembled, with falls of a  
broken heart,  
And then like that dove reassembled its forces to  
play out its part ;  
Till it came to a fall that was dying, the end of an  
infinite grief,  
A sobbing and throbbing and sighing that death  
was a welcome relief :  
And so there was silence once more, and the moon-  
light looked sad as a pall,  
And I stood entranced on the shore and marvelled  
what next would befall.

And thus all-expectant abiding I waited not long,  
for soon  
A boat came gliding and gliding out in the light of  
the moon,  
Gliding with muffled oars, slowly, a thin dark line,  
Round from the shadowing shores into the silver  
shine  
Of the clear moon westering now, and still drew on  
and on,  
While the water before its prow breaking and  
glistening shone,

Slowly in silence strange ; and the rower rowed till  
it lay

Afloat within easy range deep in the curve of the  
bay :

And besides the rower were two ; a Woman, who  
sat in the stern,

And Her by her fame I knew, one of those fames  
that burn,

Startling and kindling the world, one whose likeness  
we everywhere see ;

And a man reclining half-curved with an indolent  
grace at her knee,

The Signor, lord of her choice ; and he lightly  
touched a guitar ;—

A guitar for that glorious voice ! Illumine the sun  
with a star !

She sat superb and erect, stately, all-happy,  
serene,

Her right hand toying unchecked with the hair of  
that page of a Queen ;

With her head and her throat and her bust like the  
bust and the throat and the head

Of Her who has long been dust, of her who shall  
never be dead,

Preserved by the potent art made trebly potent  
by love,

While the transient ages depart from under the  
heavens above,—

Preserved in the colour and line on the canvas  
fulgently flung  
By Him the Artist divine who triumphed and  
vanished so young :  
Surely there rarely hath been a lot more to be  
envied in life  
Than thy lot, O FORNARINA, whom RAPHAEL'S  
heart took to wife.

There was silence yet for a time save the tinkling  
capricious and quaint,  
Then She lifted her voice sublime, no longer  
tender and faint,  
Pathetic and tremulous, no ! but firm as a column  
it rose,  
Rising solemn and slow with a full rich swell to  
the close,  
Firm as a marble column soaring with noble pride  
In a triumph of rapture solemn to some Hero  
deified ;  
In a rapture of exultation made calm by its stress  
intense,  
In a triumph of consecration and a jubilation  
immense.  
And the Voice flowed on and on, and ever it  
swelled as it poured,  
Till the stars that throbbed as they shone seemed  
throbbing with it in accord ;

Till the moon herself in my dream, still Empress  
of all the night,  
Was only that voice supreme translated into pure  
light :  
And I lost all sense of the earth though I still had  
sense of the sea ;  
And I saw the stupendous girth of a tree like the  
Norse World-Tree ;  
And its branches filled all the sky, and the deep  
sea watered its root,  
And the clouds were its leaves on high and the  
stars were its silver fruit ;  
Yet the stars were the notes of the singing and the  
moon was the voice of the song,  
Through the vault of the firmament ringing and  
swelling resistlessly strong ;  
And the whole vast night was a shell for that  
music of manifold might,  
And was strained by the stress of the swell of the  
music yet vaster than night.  
And I saw as a crystal fountain whose shaft was a  
column of light  
More high than the loftiest mountain ascend the  
abyss of the night ;  
And its spray filled all the sky, and the clouds  
were the clouds of its spray,  
Which glittered in star-points on high and filled  
with pure silver the bay ;

And ever in rising and falling it sang as it rose  
and it fell,  
And the heavens with their pure azure walling all  
pulsed with the pulse of its swell,  
For the stars were the notes of the singing and the  
moon was the voice of the song  
Through the vault of the firmament ringing and  
swelling ineffably strong ;  
And the whole vast night was a shell for that music  
of manifold might,  
And was strained by the stress of the swell of the  
music yet vaster than night :  
And the fountain in swelling and soaring and filling  
beneath and above,  
Grew flushed with red fire in outpouring, trans-  
muting great power into love,  
Great power with a greater love flushing, immense  
and intense and supreme,  
As if all the World's heart-blood outgushing ensan-  
guined the trance of my dream ;  
And the waves of its blood seemed to dash on the  
shore of the sky to the cope  
With the stress of the fire of a passion and yearning  
of limitless scope,  
Vast fire of a passion and yearning, keen torture of  
rapture intense,  
A most unendurable burning consuming the soul  
with the sense :—

“Love, love only, forever; love with its torture of bliss;  
All the world’s glories can never equal two souls  
in one kiss :

Love, and ever love wholly; love in all time and  
all space ;

Life is consummate then solely in the death of a  
burning embrace.”

And at length when that Voice sank mute, and  
silence fell over all

Save the tinkling thin of that lute, the deep heavens  
rushed down like a pall,

The stars and the moon for a time with all their  
splendours of light,

Were quenched with that Voice sublime, and great  
darkness filled the night . . . .

When I felt again the scent of the night-flowers  
rich and sweet,

As ere my senses went, and knew where I stood on  
my feet,

And saw the yet-bright bay and the moon gone low  
in my dream,

The boat had passed away with Her the Singer  
supreme ;

She was gone, the marvellous Singer whose wonder-  
ful world-wide fame

Could never possibly bring her a tithe of her just  
acclaim.

And I wandered all night in a trance of rapture  
and yearning and love,  
And saw the dim grey expanse flush far with the  
dawning above ;  
And I passed that copse in the night, but the  
nightingales all were dumb  
From their passionate aching delight, and perhaps  
whoever should come  
On the morrow would find, I have read, under its  
bush or its tree.  
Some poor little brown bird dead, dead of its  
melody,  
Slain by the agitation, by the stress and the strain  
of the strife,  
And the pang of the vain emulation in the music  
yet dearer than life.  
And I heard the skylarks singing high in the  
morning sun,  
All the sunrise heavens ringing as the sunset heavens  
had done :  
And ever I dreamed and pondered while over the  
fragrant soil,  
My happy footsteps wandered before I resumed my  
toil :—  
Truly, my darling, my Alice, truly the whole night  
long  
Have I filled to the brim love's chalice with the  
wine of music and song.

I have passed and repassed your door from the  
singing until the dawn  
A dozen times and more, and ever the curtains  
drawn ;  
And now that the morn is breaking out of the  
stillness deep,  
Sweet as my visions of waking be all your visions  
of sleep !  
Could you but wake, O my dearest, a moment, and  
give one glance,  
Just a furtive peep the merest, to learn the day's  
advance !  
For I must away up the dale and over the hill to  
my toil,  
And the night's rich dreams grow pale in the work-  
ing day's turmoil ;  
But to-night, O my darling, my Alice, till night it  
will not be long,  
We will fill to the brim love's chalice with the wine  
of music and song ;  
And never the memory fails of what I have learnt  
in my dream  
From the song of the nightingales and the song of  
the Singer supreme :—  
“ Love, love only, for ever ; love with its torture  
and bliss ;  
All the world's glories can never equal two souls in  
one kiss :



Love, love ever and wholly ; love in all time and  
all space ;

Love is consummate then solely in the death of a  
burning embrace."

*February 1882.*

## TO H. A. B.

ON MY FORTY-SEVENTH BIRTHDAY.

*Wednesday, November 23, 1881.*

WHEN one is forty years and seven,  
Is seven and forty sad years old,  
He looks not onward for his Heaven,  
The future is too blank and cold,  
Its pale flowers smell of graveyard mould ;  
He looks back to his life's past ;  
If age is silver, youth is gold :—  
Could youth but last, could youth but last !

He turns back toward his youthful past  
A-throb with life and love and hope,  
Whose long-dead joys in memory last,  
Whose shining days had ample scope ;  
He turns and lingers on the slope  
Whose dusk leads down to sightless death :—  
The sun once crowned that darkening cope,  
And song once thrilled this weary breath.

Ah, he plods wearily to death,  
Adown the gloaming into night,  
But other lives breathe joyous breath  
In morning's boundless golden light ;  
Their feet are swift, their eyes are bright,  
Their hearts beat rhythms of hope and love,  
Their being is a pure delight  
In earth below and heaven above.

And *you* have hope and joy and love,  
And you have youth's abounding life,  
Whose crystal currents flow above  
The stones and sands of care and strife.  
May all your years with joys be rife,  
May you grow calmly to your prime,  
A maiden sweet, a cherished wife,  
A happy mother in due time.

All good you wish me, past my prime,  
I wish with better hope to you,  
And richer blessings than old Time  
And Fate or Fortune found my due :  
For you are kind and good and true,  
And so when *you* are forty-seven  
May spouse and children in your view  
Make Home the happiest life-long Heaven.

## P R O E M

O ANTIQUE fables ! beautiful and bright  
And joyous with the joyous youth of yore ;  
O antique fables ! for a little light  
Of that which shineth in you evermore,  
To cleanse the dimness from our weary eyes,  
And bathe our old world with a new surprise  
Of golden dawn entrancing sea and shore.

We stagger under the enormous weight  
Of all the heavy ages piled on us,  
With all their grievous wrongs inveterate,  
And all their disenchantments dolorous,  
And all the monstrous tasks they have bequeathed ;  
And we are stifled with the airs they breathed ;  
And read in theirs our dooms calamitous.

Our world is all stript naked of their dreams ;  
No deities in sky or sun or moon,  
No nymphs in woods and hills and seas and streams ;  
Mere earth and water, air and fire, their boon ;

No God in all our universe we trace,  
No Heaven in the infinitude of space,  
No life beyond death—coming not too soon.

Our souls are stript of their illusions sweet,  
Our hopes at best in some far future years  
For others, not ourselves; whose bleeding feet  
Wander this rocky waste where broken spears  
And bleaching bones lie scattered on the sand;  
Who know *we* shall not reach the Promised  
Land;—

Perhaps a mirage glistening through our tears.

And if there be this Promised Land indeed,  
Our children's children's children's heritage,  
Oh, what a prodigal waste of precious seed,  
Of myriad myriad lives from age to age,  
Of woes and agonies and blank despairs,  
Through countless cycles, that some fortunate heirs  
May enter, and conclude the pilgrimage!

But if it prove a mirage after all!  
Our last illusion leaves us wholly bare,  
To bruise against Fate's adamant wall,  
Consumed or frozen in the pitiless air;  
In all our world, beneath, around, above,  
One only refuge, solace, triumph,—Love,  
Sole star of light in infinite black despair.

O antique fables ! beautiful and bright,  
 And joyous with the joyous youth of yore ;  
 O antique fables ! for a little light  
 Of that which shineth in you evermore,  
 To cleanse the dimness from our weary eyes,  
 And bathe our old world with a new surprise  
 Of golden dawn entrancing sea and shore.

*January 1882.*

## THE POET AND HIS MUSE

I SIGHED unto my Muse, "O gentle Muse,  
Would you but come and kiss my aching brow,  
And thus a little life and joy infuse  
Into my brain and heart so weary now ;  
Into my heart so sad with emptiness  
Even when unafflicted by the stress  
Of all our kind's poor life ;  
Into my brain so feeble and so listless,  
Crushed down by burthens of dark thought  
resistless  
Of all our want and woe and unresulting strife.

"Would you but come and kiss me on the brow,  
Would you but kiss me on the pallid lips  
That have so many years been songless now,  
And on the eyes involved in drear eclipse ;  
That thus the barren brain long overwrought  
Might yield again some blossoms of glad thought,  
And the long-mute lips sing,  
And the long-arid eyes grow moist and tender  
With some new vision of the ancient splendour  
Of beauty and delight that lives in everything.

" Would you but kiss me on the silent lips  
     And teach them thus to sing some new sweet  
         song ;  
 Would you but kiss my eyes from their eclipse  
     With some new tale of old-world right and  
         wrong :  
 Some song of love and joy or tender grief  
 Whose sweetness is its own divine relief,  
     Whose joy is golden bliss ;  
 Some solemn and impassioned antique story  
 Where love against dark doom burns out in glory,  
 Where life is freely staked to win one mutual kiss.

" Would you but sing to me some new dear song  
     Of love in bliss or bale alike supreme ;  
 Some story of our old-world right and wrong  
     With noble passion burning through the theme :  
 What though the story be of darkest doom,  
 If loyal spirits shining through its gloom  
     Throb to us from afar ?  
 What though the song with heavysorrows languish,  
 If loving hearts pulse to us through its anguish ?  
 Is not the whole black night enriched by one pure  
     star ? "

And lo ! She came, the ever-gentle Muse,  
     Sad as my heart, and languid as my brain ;  
 Too gentle in her loving to refuse,  
     Although her steps were weariness and pain ;



Although her eyes were blank and lustreless,  
 Although her form was clothed with heaviness  
     And drooped beneath the weight ;  
 Although her lips were blanched from all their  
     blooming,  
 Her pure face pallid as from long entombing,  
 Her bright regard and smile sombre and desolate.—

“Sad as thy heart and languid as thy brain  
     I come unto thy sighing through the gloom,  
 I come with mortal weariness and pain,  
     I come as one compelled to leave her tomb :  
 Behold, am I not wrapt as in the cloud  
 Of death's investiture and sombre shroud ?  
     Am I not wan as death ?  
 Look at the withered leafage of my garland,  
     Is it not nightshade from the sad dim far land  
 Of night and old oblivion and no mortal breath ?

“I come unto thy sighing through the gloom,  
     My hair dishevelled dank with dews of  
         night,  
 Reluctantly constrained to leave my tomb ;  
     With eyes that have for ever lost their light ;  
 My vesture mouldering with deep death's disgrace,  
     My heart as chill and bloodless as my face,

My forehead like a stone ;  
 My spirit sightless as my eyes are sightless,  
 My inmost being nerveless, soulless, lightless,  
 My joyous singing voice a harsh sepulchral moan.

“ My hair dishevelled dank with dew of night,  
 From that far region of dim death I come,  
 With eyes and soul and spirit void of light,  
 With lips more sad in speech than stark and  
 dumb :

Lo, you have ravaged me with dolorous thought  
 Until my brain was wholly overwrought,  
 Barren of flowers and fruit ;  
 Until my heart was bloodless for all passion,  
 Until my trembling lips could no more fashion  
 Sweet words to fit sweet airs of trembling lyre and lute.

“ From the sad regions of dim death I come ;  
 We tell no tales there for our tale is told,  
 We sing no songs there for our lips are dumb,  
 Likewise our hearts and brains are graveyard  
 mould ;  
 No wreaths of laurel, myrtle, ivy or vine,  
 About our pale and pulseless brows entwine,  
 And that sad frustrate realm  
 Nor amaranths nor asphodels can nourish,  
 But aconite and black-red poppies flourish  
 On such Lethean dew as fair life overwhelm.

“We tell no tales more, we whose tale is told ;  
As your brain withered and your heart grew  
chill

My heart and brain were turned to churchyard  
mould,

Wherefore my singing voice sank ever still ;  
And I, all heart and brain and voice, am  
dead ;

It is my Phantom here beside your bed

That speaketh to you now ;

Though you exist still, a mere form inurning

The ashes of dead fires of thought and yearning,  
Dead faith, dead love, dead hope, in hollow breast  
and brow.”

When It had moaned these words of hopeless  
doom,

The Phantom of the Muse once young and  
fair,

Pallid and dim from its disastrous tomb,

Of Her so sweet and young and *débonnaire*,  
So rich of heart and brain and singing voice,  
So quick to shed sweet tears and to rejoice  
And smile with ravishing grace ;

My soul was stupefied by its own reaping,

Then burst into a flood of passionate weeping,  
Tears bitter as black blood streaming adown my  
face.

“O Muse, so young and sweet and glad and fair,

O Muse of hope and faith and joy and love,  
O Muse so gracious and so *débonnaire*,

Darling of earth beneath and heaven above ;  
If Thou art gone into oblivious death,  
Why should I still prolong my painful breath ?

Why still exist, the urn  
Holding of once-great fires the long dead ashes,  
No sole spark left of all their glow and flashes,  
Fires never to rekindle more and shine and burn ?

“O Muse of hope and faith and joy and love,  
Soul of my soul, if Thou in truth art dead,  
A mournful alien in our world above,

A Phantom moaning by my midnight bed ;  
How can I be alive, a hollow form  
With ashes of dead fires once bright and warm ?

What thing is worth my strife ?  
The Past a great regret, the Present sterile,  
The Future hopeless, with the further peril  
Of withering down and down to utter death-  
in-life.

“Soul of my soul, canst Thou indeed be dead ?  
What mean for me if I accept their lore ;  
Thy words, O Phantom moaning by my bed,  
‘ I cannot sing again for evermore ’ ?

*I* nevermore can think or feel or dream  
Or hope or love—the fatal loss supreme !

I am a soulless clod ;  
No germ of life within me that surpasses  
The little germs of weeds and flowers and grasses  
Wherewith our liberal Mother decks the graveyard  
sod.

“ I am half-torpid yet I spurn this lore,

I am long silent yet cannot avow  
My singing voice is lost for evermore ;

For lo, this beating heart, this burning brow,  
This spirit gasping in keen spasms of dread  
And fierce revulsion that it is not dead,

This agony of the sting :  
What soulless clod could have these tears and  
sobblings,  
These terrors that are hopes, these passionate  
throbbings?

Dear Muse, revive ! we yet may dream and love and  
sing ! ”

## THE SLEEPER \*

THE fire is in a steadfast glow,  
The curtains drawn against the night ;  
Upon the red couch soft and low  
Between the fire and lamp alight  
She rests half-sitting, half-reclining,  
Encompassed by the cosy shining,  
Her ruby dress with lace trimmed white.

Her left hand shades her drooping eyes  
Against the fervour of the fire,  
The right upon her cincture lies  
In languid grace beyond desire,  
A lily fallen among roses ;  
So placidly her form reposes,  
It scarcely seemeth to respire.

She is not surely all awake,  
As yet she is not all asleep ;  
The eyes with lids half-open take  
A startled deprecating peep

---

\* Reprinted by permission from the *Cornhill Magazine*.

Of quivering drowsiness, then slowly  
The lids sink back, before she wholly  
Resigns herself to slumber deep.

The side-neck gleams so pure beneath  
The underfringe of gossamer,  
The tendrils of whose faery wreath  
The softest sigh suppressed would stir.  
The little pink-shell ear-rim flushes  
With her young blood's translucent blushes,  
Nestling in tresses warm as fur.

The contour of her cheek and chin  
Is curved in one delicious line,  
Pure as a vase of porcelain thin  
Through which a tender light may shine ;  
Her brow and blue-veined temple gleaming  
Beneath the dusk of hair back-streaming  
Are as a virgin's marble shrine.

The ear is burning crimson fire,  
The flush is brightening on the face,  
The lips are parting to suspire,  
The hair grows restless in its place  
As if itself new tangles wreathing ;  
The bosom with her deeper breathing  
Swells and subsides with ravishing grace.

The hand slides softly to caress,  
Unconscious, that fine-pencilled curve  
"Her lip's contour and downiness,"  
Unbending with a sweet reserve ;  
A tender darkness that abashes  
Steals out beneath the long dark lashes,  
Whose sightless eyes make eyesight swerve.

The hand on chin and throat downslips,  
Then softly, softly on her breast ;  
A dream comes fluttering o'er the lips,  
And stirs the eyelids in their rest,  
And makes their undershadows quiver,  
And like a ripple on a river  
Glides through her breathing manifest.

I feel an awe to read this dream  
So clearly written in her smile ;  
A pleasant not a passionate theme,  
A little love, a little guile ;  
I fear lest she should speak revealing  
The secret of some maiden feeling  
I have no right to hear the while.

The dream has passed without a word  
Of all that hovered finely traced ;  
The hand has slipt down, gently stirred  
To join the other at her waist ;



Her breath from that light agitation  
Has settled to its slow pulsation ;  
She is by deep sleep re-embraced.

Deep sleep, so holy in its calm,  
So helpless, yet so awful too ;  
Whose silence sheds as sweet a balm  
As ever sweetest voice could do ;  
Whose trancèd eyes, unseen, unseeing  
Shadowed by pure love, thrill our being  
With tender yearnings through and through.

Sweet sleep ; no hope, no fear, no strife ;  
The solemn sanctity of death,  
With all the loveliest bloom of life ;  
Eternal peace in mortal breath :  
Pure sleep from which she will awaken  
Refreshed as one who hath partaken  
New strength, new hope, new love, new faith.

*January 1882.*

## MODERN PENELOPE

(RIDDLE SOLVED.)

WHAT did she mean by that crochet work ?

The work that never got done,  
Lolling as indolent as a Turk,  
Looking demure as a Nun :  
What subtle mystery might lurk  
(Of course there must be one)  
In that Penelope web of work,  
The work that never got done ?

She lolled on the low couch just under the light  
So very serene and staid :  
We had some other guests that night,  
One sang, another played,  
A couple discovered the stars were bright,  
Of course a youth and a maid,  
I watched her knitting under the light  
So very serene and staid.

I knew that she was a rogue in her heart,  
As roguish as ever could be,  
And she knew that I knew, yet would not dart  
A single glance at me,

But seemed as it were withdrawn apart  
Amid the companie,  
A nun in her face with a rogue in her heart  
As roguish as ever could be.

I like a riddle when its knot  
Involves a pretty girl,  
I puzzle about, now cold, now hot,  
Through every loop and twirl,  
For the question is "Who" as well as "What"?  
And the answer is thus a pearl,  
And really you cannot study the knot,  
Unless you study the girl.

With a graceful lazy kittypuss air  
She fingered the net and the ball :  
At first she started to work on the square,  
And then she undid all :  
To make it round was next her care,  
But the progress was strangely small,  
With a graceful lazy kittypuss air  
Trifling with net and ball.

About her lips a quiet smile  
Came hovering, then took rest :  
A butterfly in the selfsame style  
Will choose some sweet flower's breast :

Her eyes were drooping all the while,  
But the drooping lids expressed  
The satisfaction of a smile  
Like a butterfly at rest.

Her hands kept floating to and fro  
Like a pair of soft white doves,  
In gentle dalliance coy and slow  
Around a nest of Loves :  
And against my chair her couch was low,  
And six was the size of her gloves,  
They were charming those hands there to and fro  
Like a pair of soft white doves.

Her fair face opened like a flower,  
And a sigh thrilled the smile on her lips,  
And her eyes shone out with a dazzling power  
From the dream of their half-eclipse  
As she welcomed the trill of "A summer shower"  
With plausible finger-tips—  
Oh ! her eyes so bright, and her face like a flower,  
And the exquisite smile of her lips !

Those hands kept floating soft and white  
Our hearts to mesmerise,  
Those dark eyes keep half-veiled their light  
To lure and lure our eyes ;

That web is but a subtle sleight  
To mesh us by surprise :  
Do I not read your riddle right,  
Penelope the wise ?

O you nun in face with the rogue in your heart  
As roguish as ever can be,  
You have played an immensely wiser part  
Than the old Penelope :  
You have caught twin loves in the toils of your art,  
And neither will ever get free :  
You have won the game of a heart for a heart,  
And when shall the settling be ?

## AT BELVOIR

*Sunday, July 3, 1881.*

A BALLAD, HISTORICAL AND PROPHETIC.

*("In maiden meditation, fancy free.")*

My thoughts go back to last July,  
Sweet happy thoughts and tender ;—  
"The bridal of the earth and sky,"  
A day of noble splendour ;  
A day to make the saddest heart  
In joy a true believer ;  
When two good friends we roamed apart  
The shady walks of Belvoir.

A maiden like a budding rose,  
Unconscious of the golden  
And fragrant bliss of love that glows  
Deep in her heart infolden ;  
A Poet old in years and thought,  
Yet not too old for pleasance,  
Made young again and fancy-fraught  
By such a sweet friend's presence.

The other two beyond our ken  
Most shamefully deserted,  
And far from all the ways of men  
Their stealthy steps averted :  
Of course our Jack would go astray,  
Erotic and erratic ;  
But Mary !—well, I own the day  
Was really too ecstatic.

We roamed with many a merry jest  
And many a ringing laughter ;  
The slow calm hours too rich in zest  
To heed before and after :  
Yet lingering down the lovely walks  
Soft strains anon came stealing,  
A finer music through our talks  
Of sweeter, deeper feeling :

Yes, now and then a quiet word  
Of seriousness dissembling  
In smiles would touch some hidden chord  
And set it all a-trembling :  
I trembled too, and felt it strange ;—  
Could I be in possession  
Of music richer in its range  
Than yet had found expression ?

The cattle standing in the mere,  
The swans upon it gliding,  
The sunlight on the waters clear,  
The radiant clouds dividing ;  
The solemn sapphire sky above,  
The foliage lightly waving,  
The soft air's Sabbath peace and love  
To satisfy all craving.

We mapped the whole fair region out  
As Country of the Tender,  
From first pursuit in fear and doubt  
To final glad surrender :  
Each knoll and arbour got its name,  
Each vista, covert, dingle ;—  
No young pair now may track the same  
And long continue single !

And in the spot most thrilling-sweet  
Of all this Love-Realm rosy  
Our truant pair had found retreat,  
Unblushing, calm and cosy :  
Where seats too wide for one are placed,  
And yet for two but narrow,  
It's " Let my arm steal round your waist,  
And be my winsome marrow ! "



Reclining on a pleasant lea  
Such tender scenes rehearsing,  
A freakish fit seized him and me  
For wildly foolish versing :  
We versed of this, we versed of that,  
A pair of mocking sinners,  
While our lost couple strayed or sat  
Oblivious of their dinners.

But what was strange, our maddest rhymes  
In all their divagations  
Were charged and over-charged at times  
With deep vaticinations :  
I yearn with wonder at the power  
Of Poetry prophetic  
Which in my soul made that blithe hour  
With this hour sympathetic.

For though we are in winter now,  
My heart is in full summer :  
Old Year, old Wish, have made their bow ;  
I welcome each new-comer.  
“The King is dead, long live the King !  
The throne is vacant never !”  
Is true, I read, of everything,  
So of my heart for ever !

My thoughts go on to next July,  
More happy thoughts, more tender ;  
"The bridal of the earth and sky,"  
A day of perfect splendour ;  
A day to make the saddest heart  
In bliss a firm believer ;  
When two True Loves may roam apart  
The shadiest walks of Belvoir.

There may be less of merry jest  
And less of ringing laughter,  
Yet life be much more rich in zest  
And richer still thereafter ;  
The love-scenes of that region fair  
Have very real rehearsing,  
And tremulous kisses thrill the air  
Far sweetlier than sweet versing ;

The bud full blown at length reveal  
Its deepest golden burning ;  
The heart inspired with love unseal  
Its inmost passionate yearning :  
The music of the hidden chord  
At length find full expression ;  
The Seraph of the Flaming Sword  
Assume divine possession.

*January 1882.*

# A S T R A N G E R

## I.

It is not surely, this, a little thing,  
That day and night and every Sabbath day  
Throughout these months of winterless glad Spring,

March mild as April, April sweet as May,  
And May as rich as June in common years,  
It has been given me upon my way,

Given to me and all my village peers,  
But most to me as my full heart knows well,  
Brimming my eyes with tender wistful tears

And throbbing with strange awe ineffable,  
To meet and pass, to follow with slow pace,  
Or on the street or in our quiet dell

Or through the fields, that Lady of all grace  
With sweet sad eyes and noble mournful face.

## II.

We know not who she is or whence she came,  
She and her little boy with her own eyes  
And brow and patient smile, whose Christian name

Without the surname tells us where he lies  
With her heart buried in the self-same grave :  
The larks were singing in the soft blue skies,

And even some few violets were brave  
To breathe faint sweetness on the bland warm air,  
Good Valentine such benediction gave,

When she arrived with him, her anxious care,  
Her only joy, her terrible dark grief :  
In early April he was lying there ;

The Spring all blithe with bud and flower and leaf  
And scent and song above his Spring so brief.

## III.

Only the Christian name upon the stone  
Above the date of birth and date of death ;  
Two syllables of everlasting moan,

Immortal sorrow breathing mortal breath,  
Continual weeping that would fain not weep,  
Sad comforting that vainly comforteth

The deadly anguish graven far more deep  
Upon the heart than on the marble cold,  
“ For so He giveth His beloved sleep.”

Yet with a lofty patience she controlled  
The outward signs of anguish ; eve and morn  
Tending that little bed of sacred mould

And others near it that were left forlorn ;  
Praying, I think, to sleep herself outworn.

## IV.

Her sorrow flowed with blessings from above ;  
Her heart of joy and hope was in that tomb,  
But not her heart of sympathy and love :

While her young flower was fading from its bloom  
She had been wonderfully sweet and kind ;  
And now that it was buried in the gloom

Her own sore suffering did but closelier bind  
Her heart to other hearts in all distress ;  
The little angel in her sad soul shrined

Was a true angel of pure gentleness  
And soft compassion and unwearying will  
To soothe and aid and with all solace bless :

Our joys and sorrows take our nature still ;  
Hers wrought bright good from her own darkest ill.

## v.

Tenderness, worship, bliss in yearning pain !—  
To see her young and fair and more than fair,  
Amidst us yet not of us, sole remain

As sanctified already unaware ;  
To see the peacefulness of pure white brow  
Beneath the smoothness of the rich brown hair ;

The cloistral solitude without the vow ;  
The self-renunciation mild and meek  
With meekness that is ever glad to bow,

Evading honours such as others seek,  
Yet in its stooping cannot help but rise ;  
To hear that soft slow voice its good words speak ;

To feel the fascination of those eyes,  
Solemn and dark and deep as midnight skies.

## VI.

I did not wonder she could be so pure  
Amidst our petty cares and sordid strife,  
But how our common meanness could endure  
Beneath the lofty radiance of her life ;  
Until I saw how, fine and soft and clear  
As starbeams quivering through the darkness rife,  
Her effluence shone on souls all dull and drear :  
Then as the Moon in moving through the Night  
Bears round her ever her own hemisphere  
Of tranquil beauty and entrancing light  
By solemn shadows more mysterious made,  
Her regnant beauty turned all darkness bright  
Or glorified mysteriously its shade ;  
Fair Queen most queenly as in Night arrayed.

## VII.

Oh, joyless joy of this most bounteous June,  
For with the Maytide She is gone, is gone !  
All men adore and love the one sole Moon ;  
But she of all on whom her light has shone,  
Of all her pure and gracious light has blest,  
Discerns no mortal save Endymion,

To him alone unveils her virgin breast,  
On him alone outpours her love divine.  
What shall we do who undistinguished rest?

Shall we against her solemn choice repine?  
Or shall we rather lift our souls above  
To hold her ever in a crystal shrine,

The perfect beauty of Heaven's brooding Dove,  
The sacred vision of Heaven's reachless Love?

*March 1882.*



## LAW v. GOSPEL \*

THE Gospel and the Law of late  
Have been at sad dissension  
Before the Judge and Magistrate :  
Old Satan's last invention.  
Of course the Law upholds the Law,  
The Gospel over-ruling ;  
And those who have St. Paul in awe  
Must seek more modern schooling.

The Gospel says, Swear not at all ;  
The Law, or good or bad law,  
Says, You must swear, whate'er befall,  
Or else I fine you, Bradlaugh.  
Whereon he goes and swears himself  
In solemn legal banter ;  
His fellow-members on the shelf  
Deposit him instanter.

---

\* This and the two pieces following are reprinted from the *Weekly Dispatch*. "Despotism Tempered by Dynamite" was the last poem written by the author.

And then we have that narrow sect  
Of most Peculiar People,  
Who by the Book their way direct,  
And not by the Church steeple.  
They read how Asa sought not God,  
But doctors, being sickly ;  
And therefore slept beneath the sod  
With his forefathers quickly.

St. James enjoins, When one is ill,  
Send for an elder straightway ;  
Anoint and pray (no doctor's bill !)  
And thus elude Death's gateway.  
So said so done ; and then report  
Of death of son or daughter,  
And parents sentenced by the Court  
To prison for manslaughter.

And now a new and noisy set—  
The Army of Salvation—  
Our equal-minded justice fret  
With constant botheration :  
For sometimes they obstruct the way,  
And sometimes cause a riot ;  
Too much of zeal—too much, we say,  
Why can't the fools keep quiet ?

The dean and canons in their stalls  
Are placid as stalled cattle,  
And never rush out from St. Paul's  
To give the devil battle.  
In streets and lanes to brawl and fight  
Is far too low and rowdy ;  
No, if he wants a spar, invite  
Him home to Mrs. Proudie.

On Tuesday, March, the fourteenth day,  
Before Sir Thomas Owden,  
A youth was brought who blocked the way,  
Already over-crowden—  
Threadneedle-street—the wild *War Cry*,  
This well-dressed youth was selling :  
A camel and a needle's eye—  
The rest requires no telling.

Sir Thomas said he understood  
How men in shabby raiment,  
To get a living, bad or good,  
Should do this thing for payment ;  
But he could never understand  
How any young man, dressed all  
In decent clothes, could join the band,  
Like this young Henry Restall.

"It's not to get a living, sir,"  
This youth spoke fast and faster ;  
"I have been called to minister—  
I work for God, my Master."  
Sir Thomas answered (much I grieve  
If you don't find it *bon sens*),  
He never could be made believe  
In such outrageous nonsense.

This hardened youth he made reply,  
"We have reformed some thousand  
Poor drunkards ;" Sir T. winked full sly,  
And sneezing sneered, "*Der Tausend!*"  
And for a fortnight did remand,  
Upon his good behaviour,  
That youth, who now should understand  
He mustn't cry his Saviour.

Just think of Simon Peter thus,  
And all the zealous dozen,  
Brought up before Asinius,  
Our Owden's great fore-cousin.  
He would have quickly stopped their prate  
On a police-court summons ;  
We should have no Archbishop Tait,  
No pious House of Commons !

'Tis true they were but fishermen  
And suchlike, poor and humble ;  
And thus might earn a living then  
Approved by every Bumble.  
But preach a Gospel *not* for pelf !  
Absurd to Owden thinkers !—  
Just keep your Good News to yourself,  
And cease reforming drinkers !

*March 1882.*

## THE OLD STORY AND THE NEW STOREY

(HOUSE OF COMMONS, *Thursday, March 23.*)

"For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance : but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath."—MATTHEW xiii. 12.

THE Old Story says : We've another  
Young prince who will wed like a man ;  
Let us give him, because of his mother,  
An extra ten thousand per ann.  
She has barely enough for herself, sirs ;  
Not five hundred a week is his sum ;  
Some of you have vastly more pelf, sirs ;  
Let our vote be unanimous, come !

The New Storey\* says—(It is mentioned  
How, hating such meanness to hear,  
The noble array of the pensioned  
Assailed him with laughter and jeer)—

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\* Mr. Storey, M.P. for Sunderland.

He says : Public money should solely  
For good public service be spent.  
(Dear lords, what a doctrine unholy !  
Why it saps at your rights to your rent !)

He says : What I urge 'gainst a wasteful  
And unjust proposal like this  
Must to many of you be distasteful,  
And the wherefore too palpable is ;  
Since one hundred and ten of your body,  
And one hundred and twenty-six peers,  
For no service, or service of shoddy,  
Keep bleeding us numberless years.

He says : This ten thousand per annum  
You would lavish on one wealthy pair—  
Many hundred a grandad and grannam  
Would keep in a comfort too rare ;  
Or in Sunderland—that's my own borough—  
A small place—laugh on !—would secure  
Education quite free and quite thorough  
Without any rate on the poor.

He says : These same princes as dummies  
In army and navy fill posts,  
While veterans, scorched up like mummies,  
Must starve in the cold like their ghosts.

He says : Sweep away lordly flunkeys,  
If you really this money must clutch,  
Those bedizened and posturing monkeys—  
Your Gold Sticks in Waiting and such.

He says—But fine ears we won't batter  
With more of his speech unpolite ;  
So we'll give our own view of the matter,  
And *our* view of course is the right.  
*We* say : When your State-ship you're building,  
If you *will* have a gilt figure-head,  
Of course you must pay for the gilding ;  
*We* say—there's no more to be said.

It is true that the head a ship carries  
In proportion costs little when built ;  
It is true that this head never marries  
And breeds little heads to be gilt.  
It is true—but sane words are a treasure  
Too precious for subjects like these—  
Having set up such heads at your pleasure,  
You can set them aside when you please.

*April 1882.*



# DESPOTISM TEMPERED BY DYNAMITE

THERE is no other title in the world  
So proud as mine, who am no law-cramped king,  
No mere imperial monarch absolute,  
The WHITE TSAR worshipped as a visible God,  
As Lord of Heaven no less than Lord of Earth—  
I look with terror to my crowning day.

Through half of Europe my dominions spread,  
And then through half of Asia to the shores  
Of Earth's great ocean washing the New World ;  
And nothing bounds them to the Northern Pole,  
They merge into the everlasting ice—  
I look with terror to my crowning day.

Full eighty million subjects worship me—  
Their father, high priest, monarch, God on earth ;  
My children who but hold their lives with mine  
For our most Holy Russia dear and great,  
Whose might is concentrated in my hands—  
I look with terror to my crowning day.

I chain and gag with chains and gags of iron  
 The impious hands and mouths that dare express  
 A word against my sacred sovranity ;  
 The half of Asia is my prison-house,  
 Myriads of convicts lost in its Immense—  
     I look with terror to my crowning day.

I cannot chain and gag the evil thoughts  
 Of men and women poisoned by the West,  
 Frenzied in soul by the anarchic West ;  
 These thoughts transmute themselves to dynamite ;  
 My sire was borne all shattered to his tomb—  
     I look with terror to my crowning day.

My peasants rise to their unvarying toil,  
 And go to sleep outwearied by their toil,  
 Without the hope of any better life.  
 But with no hope they have no deadly fear,  
 They sleep and eat their scanty food in peace—  
     I look with terror to my crowning day.

My palaces are prisons to myself ;  
 I taste no food that may not poison me ;  
 I plant no footstep sure it will not stir  
 Instant destruction of explosive fire ;  
 I look with terror to each day and night—  
     With tenfold terror to my crowning day.

Who cannot order well a little farm  
 Shall have no great estate to bring to harm ;  
 Who squanders months and years can never be  
 Entrusted with an immortality ;  
 Who loveth not the brother at his side,  
 How can he love a dim dream deified ?

We know our lives at best are full of care,  
 But we may learn to bear and to forbear,  
 By sympathy and human fellowship,—  
 Sweet cup of solace to the parching lip,  
 Doubling all joy, diminishing all grief,  
 Soothing despair itself with some relief.

Each life is as a little plot of ground,  
 Whose owner should not blankly wall it round  
 To shut it in from others, shutting out  
 Himself from those that neighbour it about :  
 The plots must differ both in size and soil,  
 The poorest will reward kind care and toil  
 With fruits of sustenance and flowers of grace ;  
 All good, though varying in every case.  
 Down with our dead walls !—let us all enjoy  
 Our neighbours' industry without alloy ;  
 The bloom and odours of their fruits and flowers  
 Which are so like and yet so unlike ours ;  
 The singing of the birds among their trees,  
 Their glancing butterflies and honey-bees :

And sharing thus the pleasures of the whole,  
Tend that which is within our own control  
More cheerfully, more earnestly, lest weeds  
Disgracing ours, taint theirs with wafted seeds ;  
And let us cherish kindly interchange  
Of help and produce in our social range.

This is the spirit in which we have wrought  
To build our little Temple of Free Thought  
And mere Humanity—to us Divine  
Above the deity of any shrine :  
This modest Hall for Club and Institute  
Which we now open ; may it bear good fruit !  
No rigid barriers of sex or sect  
Or party in these walls do we erect :  
*In*clusion not *ex*clusion is our aim :  
Whatever freedom for ourselves we claim,  
We wish all others to enjoy the same,  
In simple womanhood's and manhood's name !  
Freedom within one law of sacred might,  
Trench not on any other's equal right.

Our creed is simple, All men are one man !  
Our sole commandment, Do what good you can.  
We gladly welcome truth where'er it shines,  
The gold and silver of the ancient mines,  
Dug out and smelted by good men of yore,  
And mines but newly opened, still in ore ;

Submitting old and modern to the test,  
 Most surely fallible but yet our best,  
 Of self-experience, knowledge, reason ; then  
 Inviting the assays of other men.  
 Buddha and Jesus, Zeno, Socrates,  
 Mohammed, Paine, Voltaire,—alike from these  
 The precious metals we accept with joy ;  
 But pray, friends, spare us from the proved alloy !

Having no rich endowments from the State,  
 Our means are small as our good-will is great :—  
 A platform for Free Thought in courteous speech,  
 And free discussion of the views of each ;  
 Some books, our true “Communion of the Saints,”  
 To feed the mind and cheer the heart that faints ;  
 Some classes for instruction and delight ;  
 A club wherein our members may unite  
 For cordial converse and such innocent pleasure  
 As makes a blessing, not a curse, of leisure !  
 Some social gatherings, where we trust to see  
 Not the Man only but the Family,  
 Where poetry and music, dance and song,  
 Shall make the sweet hours blithely dance along.

Thus all our youths and maidens, girls and boys,  
 Must link this place with all their purest joys,  
 And growing in their turn husbands and wives,  
 Fathers and mothers, may devote their lives,

Not as an irksome task, but gracious duty, '  
Full-fraught with light and sweetness, love and  
    beauty,  
To cherish, cultivate, and propagate,  
Or here or elsewhere as shall be their fate,  
When we ourselves are dead save in our deeds,  
This nursling from the ever-precious seeds  
Which we have in our time inherited  
From the brave culture of our noble Dead ;  
Our small addition to their great work done,  
The present work in our loved town begun  
This Sunday, March sixth, Eighteen eighty-one.



## EARLY POEMS





# THE DOOM OF A CITY

A FANTASIA.

## PART I.

### THE VOYAGE.

#### I.

FROM out the house I crept,  
The house which long had caged my homeless life :  
The mighty City in vast silence slept,  
Dreaming away its tumult, toil, and strife :  
But sleep and sleep's rich dreams were not for me,  
For me, accurst, whom terror and the pain  
Of baffled longings, and starved misery,  
And such remorse as sears the breast,  
And hopeless doubt which gnaws the brain  
Till wildest action blind and vain  
Would be more welcome than supine unrest,  
Drove forth as one possest  
To leave my kind and dare the desert sea ;  
To drift alone and far,  
Dubious of any port or isle to gain,  
Ignorant of chart and star,  
Upon that infinite and mysterious main

Which wastes in foam against our shore ;  
Whose moans and murmurs evermore,  
    Insupportably sublime,  
Haunting the crowded tumult of our Time,  
    Suspend its hurrying breath—  
Like whispers of sad ghosts and spirits free  
    From world's beyond our life and death,  
The unknown awful realm where broods Eternity.

## II.

I paced through desert streets, beneath the gleam  
Of lamps that lit my trembling life alone ;  
Like lamps sepulchral which had slowly burned  
Through sunless ages, deep and undiscerned,  
Within a buried City's maze of stone ;  
Whose peopling corpses, while they ever dream  
Of birth and death—of complicated life  
    Whose days and months and years  
Are wild with laughters, groans, and tears,  
    As with themselves and Doom  
They wage, with loss or gain, incessant strife,  
Indeed, lie motionless within their tomb,  
Lie motionless and never laugh or weep,  
    All still, and buried deep  
    For ever in death's sleep,  
While burn the quiet lamps amidst the breathless  
gloom.

## III.

My boat lay waiting there,  
Upon the moonless river  
Whose pulse had ceased to quiver  
In that unnatural hush of brooding night.  
I thought, Free breezes course the billowy deep !  
And rowed on panting through the feverous air,  
Leaving the great main waters on my right  
For that canal which creeps into the sea  
Across the livid marshes wild and bare.  
So, slowly faded back from sight,  
As doth a dream insensibly  
Fade backward on the ebbing tide of sleep,  
That city which had home nor hope for me,  
That stifling tomb from which I now was free.

## IV.

Like some weak life whose sluggish moments  
creep  
Diffused on worthless objects, yet whose tide  
With dull reluctance hard to understand  
Refrains its death-in-life from death's full sleep,  
The river's shallow waters oozed out wide,  
Inclosing dreary flats of barren sand ;  
So merged at last into the lethal waste  
That bounds of sea and stream could not be traced.

## v.

Long languidly I rowed,  
With sick and weary pain,  
Between the deepest channel's bitter weeds  
Whose rankness salt slime feeds ;  
And so out blindly thro' the dismal main,  
Now shaken with a long hoarse growling swell.  
And soon the Tempest—as a king who had slept  
The sleep of worn-out frenzy, while his slaves  
Cowered still in stupor till he woke again  
Refreshed for carnage—from his torpor leapt  
Breathed swarthy pallor through the dense low  
sky,

And hurrying swift and fell  
Outspeded his own thunder-bearing glooms ;  
Then prone and instantaneous from on high  
Plunged down in one tremendous blast,  
Which crashed into white dust the heaving waves  
And left the ocean level when it past. . . .  
There was a moment's respite ; silence reigned,—  
Such shuddering silence as may once appal  
The universe of tombs,  
Ere the last trumpet's clangour rend them all :  
And I sank down, one frail and helpless man  
Alone with desolation on the sea,  
To pray while any sense of prayer remained  
Amidst the horrors overwhelming me.

## VI.

How shall I tell that tempest's thunder-story?—  
The soldier plunged into the Battle-stress,  
Struggling and gasping in the mighty flood,  
Stunned with the roar of cannon, blind with smoke,  
'Midst yells and trappings drunk and mad with  
    blood,  
What knows he of the Battle's spheric glory?  
Of heavenly laws that all its evil bless—  
Of sacred rights of justice which invoke  
Its sternest pleading—of the tranquil eye  
Triumphant o'er its chaos—of the Mind  
Commanding all, serene and unsubdued,  
Which having first with wisest care designed  
Works to the end with vigilant fortitude;  
And from that field so drenched with angry  
    blood  
Shall reap the golden harvest, VICTORY?

## VII.

There was a stupor stung with pain and fear,  
Amidst the strangling surf flung on and on;  
There was bewilderment above all dread,  
Delirious calm and desperate joy austere  
Of revelling through the tempest lorn and lone.  
My boat and I with dizzy swiftness sped,

In strange salvation from the certain doom,  
Along the urgent ridges over-reeling  
And gathering up their ruins as they fled ;—  
And down into the depths of scooped-out gloom  
Whose crystal walls glowed black in the revealing  
Of lightning-kindled foam ; and up again,  
Perched on the giddy balance of two waves  
Which fiercely countering mingle with the shock,  
And rush aloft confused, and tower and rock  
Foaming with wild convulsion, till amain  
The mass heaves down from struggling, self-  
destroyed,

And leaves us shuddering in a gulfy void.  
Confused and intermingled, fire, sea, air,  
Wrought out their ravage ; for the thunders there  
Were echoing in the dreadly stormless caves  
And shook the deep foundations of the seas ;  
The air was like an ocean, drenched with spray  
Whose meteor-flakes outflashed tumultuously  
Against the sinking heaven's black incline,  
When sudden lightnings seemed to burst their way  
Up through the deep to flood and fire its brine,  
Ingulfin'g for each moment all the Night—  
The blackness and the howling rage—in light  
More lurid and appalling, a World-pyre. . . .  
But heart and brain were overwrought ; and soon,  
All vision reeling from my powerless eyes,  
I lay in quiet mercy-granted swoon

As senseless as the boat in which I lay :  
And we two things through all the agonies  
    Of night, tornado, sea, and fire,  
Were drifted passive on our fearful way.

## VIII.

I know not for what time I lay in trance,  
Nor in what course the tempest hurled us on.  
At length to scarce-believed deliverance  
I woke ; and saw a sweet slow silent dawn  
Upgrowing from the far dim grey abyss,—  
So slow, it seemed like some celestial flower  
Unfolding perfect petals to its prime,  
And feeling in its secret soul of bliss  
Each leaf a loveliness for many an hour,  
With amaranthine queenship over time.  
It grew : its purple splendours flecked and starred  
With golden fire spread floating up the steep  
Until they sole possessed the mighty sweep  
Of crystal lucent æther : its regard,  
The blessing of a light of peace and love,  
Charmed with a gradual spell the sullen mood  
Of the sea-giant, until all-subdued  
No more his huge bulk livid shook and hove  
'The meteor-threatenings of his tawny mane,  
No more growled lingering wrath and turbulent pain ;  
But calm and glad th' unmonstered monster lay  
Beneath the royal sun's perfected sway.



## IX.

And there was Land. Where seemed a bank of  
clouds

Piled in the South, now nobly, one by one,  
The pinnacles of lofty mountain-peaks  
Flamed keen as stars, enkindled by the sun ;  
Emerging as with life from out their shrouds  
Of silvern haze far-cleft with roseate streaks :  
And far beneath them, down along the shore,  
A wave of low round hills gleamed pure and pale.

But soon—like any human life,  
The golden promise of whose dawn doth fail  
Into the same drear noon of barren strife  
Of which our hearts were weary-sick of yore—

The day grew chill and dark ;  
And through its sullen hours the wintry gale

Beat restlessly my bark,  
Beside that coast-line drifting to and fro  
Upon the ocean's vapour-shrouded flow.

## X.

I saw grey phantoms, fading as they fled,  
Glide hurrying in loose rank  
O'er livid backgrounds of the upper sky,  
Whose vast and thunderous threat'ning overfrowned  
Abysses strangely dread—

Cold, glassy gulfs, each like an evil eye  
Of serpent-malice which is dead and blank  
To every sight but woe and agony.

The fascination of their wan green glance  
Was fixed upon the hills which, at the foot  
Of that stern wall of mountain lifted proud  
Above the firmament of level cloud,

Lay stretched out cold and mute,  
In leaden bulk, beneath the long expanse  
Of dark and desert sky, whose brooding gloom  
Was blanched with cruel pallor here and there—  
Pallor of wrath or dread, instinct with doom.  
There stretched they far, a dark and silent host,  
Like monsters stranded from their deep sea-lair

Benumbed with terror cowering ;  
Still unrecovered from the storm whose ire  
Had drowned them in wild floods of pitiless  
fire,  
Or prescient of some deadlier tempest lowering.

## XI.

At intervals, opposing the sun's track,  
Circling about the North  
Shone strangely blazoned forth  
Wild rainbow-fragments on the sweeping rack,  
The gale's rent symbol on rent banners borne.  
For ever and anon the sun gazed down

From dizzy summits of the cloud-crag's black ;  
Or where the wind had torn  
Vast jagged rifts athwart their mass  
(Behind whose heavy frown  
Faint smiles of soothing like a robe of grass  
Had fallen from him on the frozen hills),  
He gazed out powerless o'er the rain-grey sea :  
No eye which sorrows fills  
With constant bitter tears,  
Drowning all life and lustre, joy and pride,  
Can gaze more faint and wan and hopelessly  
Into the homeless world, and waste of years  
Spread out between it and the grave's sweet sleeping ;  
Can let the dark lid sink upon its weeping  
More often, fain to hide  
The chilling desolation blurred with strife  
Which, seen or unseen, maps its future life.

## XII.

Ere sunset came a storm of rain  
Ploughing up the barren main  
With fierce and vital energy,  
While brief bright lightnings flashed incessantly.  
And then the South stood up, one solid wall  
Of battlemented cloud, in which the mountains  
And hills were fused together out of sight :  
The sinking sun from his intense fire-fountains

Poured out against its heaven-absorbing might  
    Seas of lurid purple light  
And fulvous meteors, surging and devouring  
    The shattered crests, the crumbling slopes,  
    The massive walls, the river copes,  
In fortitude of glowing bronze far-towering.

## XIII.

From all the secret caverns of the air  
Night's gloomy phantoms issuing, gathered dense  
To blot and stifle out the pageant there ;  
The murmur of their motions breathing wide  
Through that new silence thrilled upon the sense ;  
When, gazing southward, I became aware  
Of some slow movement by the dim sea-side,  
As of a wind arousing from its lair  
To rend the settled vapours. I descried,  
After an interval of rapt suspense,  
By what faint gloaming yet was left of day,  
Two startling lamps uplifted slowly glide  
From out the thick and dun immensity,  
Fronting a long dark line like some array  
Of men that came in silent mystery,  
Across the undulations of the shore  
Long-winding coil on coil unbrokenly,  
To celebrate weird rites and sorceries hoar,  
Shrouded in gloom beside the moaning sea.

## XIV.

I knew, but would not know,  
I knew too well, but knowledge was despair.  
It came on vast and slow,  
And dipt those baleful meteors in the brine ;  
Whence soon it lifted them with hideous cries  
That flung strange horror through the shudder-  
ing air.  
Haling its length in many a monstrous twine,  
It bore on steadfastly those loathsome eyes,  
Set in the midst of intertangled hair  
Like sea-weed in whose jungle have their lair  
All foul and half-lived things :  
With such a gleam as haunts the rotting graves  
They fixed upon me their malignant stare ;  
Shallow and slimy, fiendish, eyes of death.  
It neared me soon with fiendish wallowings  
Athwart the heaving and repugnant waves ;  
Then paused a moment, and with one harsh  
roar  
Heaved up its whole obscene and ghastly bulk,  
To rankle in my memory evermore.  
With hissing shrieks and bursts of strangled  
breath,  
Torn by some agonising pang, it fell,  
And lay upon the sea a vast dead hulk ;

But raised yet once the huge and formless head  
Whence blood-dark foam was showering ; and  
those eyes

Glared blinking on me with the hate of Hell,  
Before it turned reluctantly and fled.  
Down, down, convicted by the holy skies,  
Away, away, O God ! it hurtled forth ;  
To cower in frozen caverns of the deep ;  
To haunt—a nightmare in that ghastly sleep—  
The death and desolation of the North.

## XV.

A man forlorn has wandered, cursed from rest,  
Through Time's dead waste, and savage howling  
seas,

Bearing a fateful Horror in his breast,  
Formless and dim, but mighty to disease ;  
Devouring, poisoning, stifling his pure life.  
And suddenly, when Hope can hope no more,  
He feels its coils unwinding from his heart,  
And rich vitality with glorious strife  
Surging through veins all shrunk and numb be-  
fore :

But also sees the Incubus depart,  
Coil after coil reluctant dragged away  
As were a serpent's from its strangled prey ;  
And thus in his first health is clearly shown

What still was hidden from his lunacy,  
 The full obscene and deadly ghastliness  
 Of that which held and ruled him to this day :  
 Abhorrence almost chills him into stone,  
 And that great blow which struck the prisoner  
     free

Hath nearly slain him by its mighty stress.  
 Such was my agony of joy that hour,  
 When saved for ever from the monster's power.

## XVI.

The sky was spacious warm and bright,  
 The clouds were pure as morning snow ;  
 In myriad points of living light  
 The sea lay laughing to and fro.  
 Above the hills a depth of sky,  
 Dim-pale with heat and light intense,  
 Was overhung by clouds piled high  
 In mountain-ranges huge and dense ;  
 Whose rifts and ridges ran aloft  
 Far to their crests of dazzling snow,  
 Whence spread a vaporous lustre soft  
 Veiling the noontide's azure glow.  
 Through mists of purple glory seen  
 Those dim and panting hill-waves lay,  
 Absorbed into the heavens serene,  
 Dissolving in the perfect day.

But when the sun burned high and bare  
In his own realm of solemn blue,  
The clouds hung isolated there,  
Dark purple grandeurs vast and few ;  
Like massive sculptures wrought at large  
Upon that dome's immensity,  
Like constant isles whose foamlit marge  
Rose high from out that sapphire sea.

And all the day my boat sped on  
With rapid gliding smooth as rest,  
As if by mystic dreamings drawn  
To some fair haven in the West ;  
Flew onward swift without a gale  
As if it were a living thing,  
And spread with joy its snow-white sail  
As spreads a bird its snow-white wing ;  
Flashed on along the lucid deep  
Dividing that most perfect sphere,  
A vault above it glowing steep,  
A vault beneath it no less clear ;  
Within whose burning sapphire-round  
The clouds, the air, the land, the sea,  
Lay thrilled with quivering glory, drowned  
In calm as of Eternity.



## PART II.

## THE CITY.

## I.

Anear the dying of that royal day  
Those amber-vested hills began to swerve ;  
And soon a lofty Pharos, gleaming white  
Upon its isle set darkly in the light,  
Beckoned us onward to the spacious bay  
Encompassed broadly by their noble curve.  
And so at length we entered it ; and faced  
The thin dark lines of countless masts, all traced  
Upon the saddest sunset ever seen—  
Spread out like an interminable waste  
Of red and saffron sand, devoured by slow  
Persistent fire ; beneath whose desolate glow  
A City lay, thick-zoned with solemn green  
Of foliage massed upon the steeps around.  
Between those mast-lines flamed the crystal fires  
Of multitudinous windows ; and on high  
Grand marble palaces and temples, crowned  
With golden domes and radiant towers and spires,  
Stood all entranced beneath that desert sky,  
Based on an awful stillness. Dead or dumb  
That mighty City through the breathless air  
Thrilled forth no pulse of sound, no faintest hum  
Of congregated life in street and square :

Becalmed beyond all calm those galleons lay,  
As still and lifeless as their shadows there,  
Fixed in the magic mirror of the bay  
As in a rose-flushed crystal weirdly fair.  
A strange, sad dream : and like a fiery pall,  
Blazoned with death, that sky hung over all.

## II.

Where, eastward from the town, the shore was  
low,  
I drew at length my shallop up the sand,—  
The quiet and gloomless twilight gathering slow ;  
And took my way across the lonely strand,  
And onward to the City, lost in thought.  
Who shall his own wild life-course understand ?  
From terror through great terrors I am brought  
To front my fate in this mysterious land.  
In my old common world, well fenced about  
With myriad lives that fellowed well my own,  
Terror and deadly anguish found me out  
And drove me forth to seek the dread Unknown ;  
Through all whose terrors I have yet been brought,  
Though hopeless, helpless, utterly alone.  
May yet my long wild night be blessed with morn ?  
Some revelation from the awful Throne  
Awaits me surely : if my life, torn free  
From dire Egyptian bondage, has been led

In safety through the all-devouring sea ;  
If, lost in foodless deserts, it was fed  
Though murmuring ever ; hath it truly trod  
Such paths for nothing? Shall it not be brought  
To stand awe-stricken 'neath some Mount of God  
Wrapt in thick clouds of thunder fire and gloom,  
And hear the Law of Heaven by which its doom  
To good or evil must be henceforth wrought ?

## III.

The moon hung golden, large, and round,  
Soothing its beauty up the quiet sky  
In swanlike slow pulsations, while I wound  
Through dewy meads and gardens of rich flowers,  
Whose fragrance like a subtle harmony  
Was fascination to the languid hours.  
A tender mist of light was interfused  
Upon the hills and waters, woods and leas,  
Throughout the gloomless gloaming ; and I mused  
Dim thoughts deep-floating in delicious dream,  
Until the long stern lines of cypress trees,  
Amidst whose plumes funereal there did seem  
To creep with quivering sobs a moaning breath,  
Awed back my heart to life—to life and death.  
Far in the mystic moonlight lay outspread,  
In trance of solemn beauty still and weird,  
That Camp and City of the ancient dead ;

And far around stood up in dense array  
Those monumental marbles ever reared  
By men still battling with the powers of Life  
To those released before them from its sway :  
Victors or vanquished in the fearful strife,  
What matters ?—ah, within our Mother's breast,  
From toil and tumult, sin and sorrow free,  
Sphered beyond hope and dread, divinely calm,  
They lie, all gathered into perfect rest ;  
And o'er the trance of their Eternity  
The Cypress waves more holy than the palm.

## IV.

A funeral train was gathered round a bier :  
The reverend priest with lifted hands and face,  
Appealing silently to Heaven's grace  
For this young soul called early from our sphere ;  
And white-robed maidens pale, whose hands scarce  
held  
What further symbol flowers they had to shed  
Upon their sweet lost sister,—awe and dread  
Numbing their noisier grief, they stood compelled  
To meet Death's eyes which wither youth from Life ;  
And leaning sole against a tree apart,  
As one might lean just stricken to the heart,  
A youth, wrought calm by woe's self-slaying strife—  
His head was sunken nerveless on his breast,

He stood a dumb blind statue of Despair.  
While all yet moved not, I approached them there,  
Murmuring : They bring this maiden to her rest  
Beneath the pure sad moon, in thoughtful night,  
Rather than in the garish day whose King  
Rides through the Heavens for ever triumphing  
Throned above ruth in never-darkened light ;  
That ere the blank dawn chills them they may gaze,  
And see her soul as some white cloud on high  
Floating serenely up the star-strewn sky. . . .  
My steps were now close near them, when amaze  
Convulsed me with a swooning suddenness—  
What people dwell within this Silent Land,  
Who thus have placed, through day and night to  
stand,  
This Scene complete in all its images  
Of Life in solemn conference with Death,  
Amidst the wide and populous solitude  
Of Death's own realm ?—a people of strange mood.  
For all,—the maidens meek with bated breath  
And eyes weighed down by awe and fear and  
sorrow,  
The priest appealing to the Heavens above,  
The youth whose mortal night could hope no  
morrow,  
The sweet young girl new riven from his love,—  
All save the flowers, the withered flowers alone,  
Were carven weirdly in unconscious stone.

## V.

Beneath my gaze was spread the princely mart.  
From out the folded hills came broad the stream  
Whose pulse flowed lifefull through the City's  
heart—

The City dead in ever-voiceless dream.  
From all her stately mansions, reared apart  
'Midst lawns and gardens, came no lamplight gleam,  
No cheerful glow and smoke of household fire ;  
No festal music dying through the night,  
Sad in its death as joyous in its birth ;  
No serenades intoning soft desire,  
To which young hearts in secret throb delight ;  
No noise of banded revellers issuing forth  
With shouts and songs and jars,  
Who find the pale moon reeling jollily  
And twinkling laughters in the high cold stars.  
Between the hills and sea  
Only a dark dead dearth  
Of soulless silence yawned in dreadful mystery.

## VI.

My limbs were shuddering while my veins ran fire,  
And hounded on by dread  
No less than by desire,  
I plunged into the City of the Dead,

And pierced its Mausolean loneliness—  
Between the self-sufficing palaces,  
Broad fronts of azure, fire and gold, which shone  
Spectrally pallid in the moonlight wan ;  
Adown great streets ; through spacious sylvan squares,  
    Whose fountains plashing lone  
Fretted the silence with perpetual moan ;  
Past range on range of marts which spread their wares  
Weirdly unlighted to the eyes of heaven,  
Jewels and silks and golden ornaments,  
Rich perfumes soul-in-soul of all rare scents,  
Viols and timbrels,—O wild mockery !  
Where are the living shrines for these adornings ?  
Shall love-tormented phantoms hither hie,  
Resolved that the tomb be no more mute,  
And thrill their heart-sick complaints from lyre and lute  
To plead against fair phantoms' cruel scorning ;  
Wakening dim ghosts of buried melodies  
To shiver out beneath the scornful skies,  
And wander homeless till they fail of breath  
About this desert realm of timeless death ?

## VII.

What saw I in the City, which could make  
All thought a frenzy and all feeling madness ?  
What found I in the City for whose sake  
Blank death were welcome as a restful gladness ?

I hold it truth, that what the stars and moon  
Can gaze upon with clear and steadfast eyes,  
Still soaring as of old to reach their noon,  
Serenely regnant in unwithered skies ;  
That scene should never fill a human being  
With hopelessness of horror in the seeing.  
Can souls be blighted where the mere trees grow ?  
Can lives be frozen where the dead streams flow ?  
Can Man be prostrate where the fleeting mountains  
Stand up and fling abroad their joyous fountains ?  
Could oceans, hills, stars, heavens, those imageries  
And shadows of our sole realities,  
Endure but for a moment undestroyed  
Were we extinct—Eternity left void ?  
O truth beyond our sin and death's concealing !—  
The ghastliest den, worst Hell of pain and fear,  
In which a spirit can have will, thought, feeling,  
Is to that spirit no unnatural sphere ;  
Nor justifies that spirit for the death  
Of firm self-trust, of love and hope and faith.

## VIII.

What found I in the City, then, which turned  
My deep and solemn hope to wild despair ?  
What mystery of horror lay inured  
Within the royal City great and fair ?



What found I?—Dead stone sentries stony-eyed,  
Erect, steel-sworded, brass-defended all,  
Guarding the sombrous gateway deep and wide  
Hewn like a cavern through the mighty wall;  
Stone statues all throughout the streets and  
squares,  
Grouped as in social converse or alone;  
Dim stony merchants holding forth rich wares  
To catch the choice of purchasers of stone;  
Fair statues leaning over balconies,  
Whose bosoms made the bronze and marble  
chill;  
Statues about the lawns, beneath the trees;  
Firm sculptured horsemen on stone horses still;  
Statues fixed gazing on the flowing river  
Over the bridge's sculptured parapet;  
Statues in boats, amidst its sway and quiver  
Immovable as if in ice-waves set:—  
The whole vast sea of life about me lay,  
The passionate, heaving, restless, sounding life,  
With all its tides and billows, foam and spray,  
Arrested in full tumult of its strife  
Frozen into a nightmare's ghastly death,  
Struck silent from its laughter and its moan;  
The vigorous heart and brain and blood and  
breath  
Stark, strangled, confined in eternal stone.

## IX.

Look away there to the right—How the bay lies  
broad and bright,

All athrob with murmurous rapture in the glory  
of the moon !

See in front the palace stand, halls and columns  
nobly planned ;

Marble home for marble dwellers is it not full  
fair and boon ?

See the myriads gathered there in that green and  
wooded square,

In mysterious congregation, — they are statues  
every one :

All are clothed in rich array ; it is some high  
festal day ;

The solemnity is perfect with that pallid moon  
for sun.

See the theatre ranged high to its dome of deep  
blue sky ;

Tier on tier of serried statues glare impassioned  
on its stage,

On its background of deep night, on its sculptured  
Chorus white,

On its lofty sculptured actors locked in deadly  
tragic rage :

Perhaps the drama was *too* great,—Titans, Furies,  
eyeless Fate

Brooded in such sulphurous darkness thunder-  
swollen o'er its doom,  
That the multitude abide overwrought and petrified,  
Waiting till satyric sun-bursts rend away the  
crushing gloom.  
Turn, and o'er the river mark that huge structure  
scowling dark :  
It is black stone seamed with crimson, hopeless  
death with cruel gore :  
In it stony jailers guard stony prisoners evil-starred ;  
Dungeoned thus within their dungeon, they are  
calm and groan no more.  
Note the temples every one—How the great gods  
are undone !  
Not a steer or goat or doveling for their holy  
hunger dies :  
Cold, long quenched their sacred fires ; dull, long  
dumb their flattering quires ;  
All the very priesthood staring at rich gifts with  
stolid eyes !  
Not a maid whose yielding charms can enrich a  
god's bold arms ;  
Yet perchance they dwell contented though thus  
shorn of wealth and state :  
Nectar-and-ambrosia-blest, they may bask in perfect  
rest,  
Since (with marble joints and larynx) Man rests  
unimportunate !

Ha ! search eagerly around—every vault beneath  
the ground,

Every mansion, every chariot, every galley,  
everywhere ;

And for ever, ever find all this blissful human  
kind

Lifted up from clay's corruption into marble  
firm and fair :

Fear and shame and anguish stilled, every evil  
passion killed,

Crooked forms and ugly faces grown transcen-  
dent works of art ;

While the grand or lovely mood of the fair and  
young and good

Is beatified in beauty that can nevermore  
depart. . . .

And the full moon gazeth down on the smokeless  
lampless town,

In a solemn trance of triumph, with her choir of  
radiant stars ;

For their peace is vext no more by a curse-and-  
shriek-swelled roar,

By ferocities, obscenities, inebriate brawls and  
jars :

Nay, the very grass and trees, and the disencum-  
bered breeze,

And the stainless river-waters, and the broad  
bright glittering bay,—

Do they all joy that the strife of our sordid rest-  
less life

Is now locked in adamantine bonds of perfect  
peace for aye ?

Ever-loved and gracious Earth, Mystic Mother of  
our birth,

This is cruel, bitter, terrible, this joy in our  
dead rest !

Canst Thou still leap forth and run, glory-speeded  
round the Sun,

O Thou Niobe of World-stars, with Thy fairest  
and Thy best—

With Thy vigorous youthful darling lying stone-  
cold on Thy breast !

x.

The Palace gates stand open wide and free ;  
The King and Queen and all their company,  
Transfigured in full splendour of their pride,  
Came flowing forth in one refulgent tide,  
While trumpets rang their silver-throated blare  
Of jubilation through the sunny air ;  
Swept onward slowly 'neath the azure skies  
Between the myriads of adoring eyes,  
And poured into the Theatre's dense sea  
Of many-billowed life triumphantly ;  
As some grand river in the sunset shine

May pour its boon of gold and crimson wine,  
 Brimming the fulness of the purpled ocean  
 Which heaves and sparkles, murmuring proud  
 emotion.

Gathered together, all awaited there  
 Such scenic storms as purify life's air ;  
 Whose scathless lightnings shimmer wildly grand,  
 Whose lofty thunders soothe sure peace more bland ;  
 And now, without a throb, without a breath,  
 They wait, all frozen into icy death.

# XI.

O marble Monarch, far more awful now  
 Than when thy crown begirt a throbbing brow !  
 No tyrant ever lived so dire and dread  
 As He who sways the sceptre in thy stead ;  
 Never before on earth did any state  
 Beneath oppression cower thus desolate,  
 Thus utterly resigned to crushing Fate !  
 SILENCE broods ghastly on the dead realm's throne :  
 Whatever life, in prayer, or sigh, or moan,  
 Would shake the Nightmare of his tyranny,  
 Shudders with anguish, horror, lunacy,  
 To feel its scorned and strangled pleadings creep  
 Like homeless spectres through the vacant deep,  
 And wither into nothingness at last—  
 Devoid of refuge, unrelieved, aghast.

## XII.

The Palace gates indeed stand open wide :  
Perchance the stately sepulchre may hide  
Some single life amidst the desolation,  
Preserved alone in mystical salvation,  
Entranced apart in holy contemplation ?  
Pace up the steps, tread through the hall,—and see  
In scattered groups all lounging listlessly  
Those armoured gallants of the Royal Guard—  
Poor fellows ! they have found it sadly hard  
To make their stately moments speed along,  
Though spurred with wine and gaming, jest and  
    song,  
Cruelly mulcted of their sumptuous share  
In the great festival proceeding there.

## XIII.

Haste on, haste on ; awaken from their tomb  
The ghostly echoes, swarming through the gloom,  
Haunting your footsteps, gathering rank on rank,  
Rustling demoniac through the deadly blank ;  
Better, far better that the air be rife  
With weird deliriums of demoniac life,  
Than void with utter idiotic death.  
Haste on, with burning blood and breathless  
    breath ;—

How clear are all things round the rapid flight !  
 Shrouded in gloom or washed with pale moon-  
     light,  
 The chemistry of terror thus intense  
 Burns them all lurid on the shrinking sense.—  
 See the mild maiden letting loose her soul  
 In tears and blushes o'er the tender scroll  
 Which plains his anguish since they two were  
     parted,  
 And raves that she, poor thing, is stony-hearted.  
 Hurry from room to room, from hall to hall ;  
 And mark the effigies on every wall—  
 Warriors and minstrels, nobles, kings, and priests,  
 Adoring, conquering, feasting royal feasts ;  
 Olympian forms, ladies divinely fair  
 With lily-sceptred hands and flower-crowned hair ;  
 See each and all ev'n as you hurry past  
 Burst into sudden life, and swarming fast  
 Join in the tingling chase through death and night,  
 While clamorous echoes voice their mad delight.

## XIV.

Most sweet young Mother ! thou hadst ample  
     pleasure  
 Left quiet alone here with thine infant treasure ;  
 Which, poised unsurely on its feeble limbs,  
 Across the sea-strange marble toward thee swims,—



One foot half-lifted, while the arms outplead  
For thine extended arms to help its need :  
It stands, thou kneelest ; never on thy breast  
Shall it fall forward in triumphant rest.

## xv.

Far in his lofty turret whence the bay  
And half of Heaven's vault were seen alway ;  
The bay, the distant ocean, and with these  
Broad scope of temples, streets, and palaces,  
The theatre, the square ; the moving throngs,  
Whose converse-murmurs flashing into songs  
And laughters winged with joy were wont to  
rise  
And wander bird-like through the sun-tranced  
skies,  
Rippling deliciously the languid air ;  
Alone, yet not alone, the Sage dwelt there.  
Doubtless his individual life required  
In seeming solitude to be inspired  
By constant intercourse with general life,  
And with the universal Spirit rife  
In Man and Nature,—One in all their forms,  
Alike contented with its worlds and worms,  
Through all its countless masks alike resplendent,  
The Breath of Life, eternal and transcendent.

## XVI.

He sits, the full-length statue of a Sage,  
Amid the busts of those of every age  
Who handed on the torch of Wisdom, bright  
With growing splendour, 'thwart the billowy  
    night  
Of shoreless Ignorance. Before him lies  
The roll which telleth on what mysteries  
He shed its lustre till they shone out clear :  
I trace its periods by the moonlight here.  
It is with swelling reverence dedicate,  
"Unto the King magnifical and great ;  
The bounteous Sun by whom we live and move  
And flourish ever : Who commands our love  
Even more throughly than our perfect awe ;  
Swaying His burning Throne by Heavenly law,  
While lifted far—by nature as by birth—  
Above the petty statutes of our earth :  
Who while His warmth createth and sustaineth  
Rich life in all, lights all ; and no less deigneth  
To feed abundantly with life and light  
What humble spheres may strive to temper night  
In realms left dark while His imperial sway  
Vouchsafeth happier realms their boon of day :  
To Him, by Whom our heritage is grown  
The flower o' the World ; to Him whose godlike  
    throne

Shall ever stand beside its subject sea,  
Fulgent with valour, arts and equity,  
Based on a princely people's love and bliss :  
CHRYсандROS, TYRANT OF COSMOPOLIS ! ”

## XVII.

Follow the problems which he hath resolved  
Though heretofore in clouds of doubt involved :  
“ Shall this fair World consume in course of time ?  
Our Earth is young ? or old ? or in her prime ? ”  
Whereto the Theses proud, less said than sung  
In liberal phrases of his golden tongue :  
“ This glorious Universe shall live for ever ;  
By all decay and death diminished never,  
Nor added to by constant birth and growth ;  
But in the balanced interchange of both,  
Ascending slowly by successive stages  
Of nobler Good and Beauty through the Ages ;  
Until its infinite Æther and the Whole  
Of stars and spheres that through it flashing roll  
Shall be informed with conscious Life and Soul :  
The All, one perfect Sphere, breathing one breath  
Of cosmic Life too pure for birth or death. . . .  
Our Earth has scarcely ceased to be a child,  
Sweet in its grace, but ignorant and wild :  
She putteth on about these very years  
The bloom of maidenhood, whose smiles and tears

Are all of Love : She openeth out her heart  
In throbs of passionate rapture, to impart  
The dearest secrets of her treasured beauty  
To Man, her Lord ; constrained by yearning duty  
Which he shall recompense with wiser love :  
How blest are we all previous men above,  
Born in this Spring of her millennial Youth !—  
O gracious Truth, divine and tranquil Truth,  
As I long years have worshipped only Thee,  
Thou hast at length unveiled Thy face to me,  
That I may ever of Thy priesthood be !”

## XVIII.

I trace not further in the tingling scroll  
The steps by which he reached this glorious goal.  
It is too horrible :—alone, alone.  
I make mad dalliance with the empty flesh,  
Whose form is whole, whose ghastly bloom is fresh ;  
And by my side, that hater of the soul—  
The grinning, the accursèd Skeleton !  
It is too horrible—O dreadful God,  
Thou know'st—only Thou,  
What dismal paths my shuddering feet have trod ;  
Yet never knew I agony until now ;  
Never,—O Thou who heardst me when I said  
Coldly and quietly, with confirming heart,  
“I take thee, Misery, for my faithful Bride :

Despair hath smoothed the secret marriage-bed  
Wherein we two, embracing close, may hide,  
    And wreak our stern unwitnessed vow—  
Never in life, nor after death, to part.  
I love thee for the love which only Thou  
    Dost bear me : Thy caresses  
Sting my faint heart, Thy kisses on my brow  
Are fire and numbing frost, Thy tingling tresses  
Like serpents creep about me even now.  
O my enamoured Darling, deadly sweet !  
    Sorcery smitten Sorceress !  
    Queen of lurid loveliness !  
Most tender-hearted Ministrant of Ill !  
My life, my soul is lying at your feet ;  
Possess me, use me, at your own wild will !”

## XIX.

O fool, fool, fool ! cherishing fatal madness !  
Mad with self-consciousness of guilt and woe,  
Mad with the folly of the world's much gladness  
While it was no less sunk in guilt and woe ;  
I shut myself up from the lives around me,  
Eating my own foul heart—envenomed food ;  
And while dark shadows more and more enwound me,  
Nourished a dreary pride of solitude ;  
The cords of sympathy which should have bound me  
In sweet communion with earth's brotherhood,

I drew in tight and tighter still around me,  
Strangling my best existence for a mood.  
What—Solitude in midst of a great City,  
In midst of crowded myriads brimmed with Life!—  
When every tear of anguish or of pity,  
When every shout of joy and scream of strife,  
When every deed and word and glance and  
gesture,  
Every emotion, impulse, secret thought  
Pent in the soul from all material vesture,  
Through all those myriads spread and inter-  
wrought ;  
Inspiring each the air with its own spirit,  
Rayed forth as light is from a fount intense ;  
The universal Æther forced to bear it,  
A certain though mysterious influence  
Affecting duly every other creature  
That breathed its breath of life ; for good or ill,  
For pain or pleasure, acting on each nature,  
Beyond the consciousness, despite the will.  
Dire Vanity ! to think to break the union  
That interweaveth strictly soul with soul  
In constant, sane, life-nourishing communion :  
The rivers ever to the ocean roll,  
The ocean-waters feed the clouds on high  
Whose rains descending feed the flowing rivers  
All the world's children must how quickly die  
Were they not all receivers and all givers !

## XX.

But this is Solitude, O dreadful Lord !  
My spirit starves in this abysmal air—  
    Of every human word,  
Of sigh and moan, of music and of prayer,  
Of passionate heart-beats felt though never heard,  
    So utterly stript bare :  
The awful heavens are tranquil and divine,  
Serene and saintly in their purple deep  
    The moon and young stars shine ;  
No living souls beneath their influence leap,  
No other eyes are fixed on them with mine :  
    Men said that Death and Sleep  
Are brothers ;—yes, as lurid lightnings may  
Be kindred to the glory of calm day,  
Or darkness of the restful night-tide boon  
To darkness of the sun eclipsed at noon. . . .  
The Soul is murdered ; and her world bereft  
    By some dire doom still left,  
A fadeless corpse whose perfect form is rife  
“ With ghastly affectations of true life.”

## XXI.

How long, how long, I cowered beside the Sage ;  
Whose head was lifted, fronting full the skies  
In tranquil triumph from his victory lone.  
Beneath that broad brow rough with thought and age,

The pitiless light-beams glittered on his eyes,  
Like fatal swords flashed keen against a stone  
To sharpen them for piercing to the heart,—  
How was his triumph smitten, pierct, and slain !

But cowering there apart,  
Upon those swelling eyeballs, that stern head,  
I ever gazed ; while in my burning brain

A cold thought soothing spread :  
As one who drains a poison-chalice slowly,  
In fixed and infinite longing to be dead ;  
So let my yearning vision cleave amain  
To this grand marble image melancholy,  
Till I have drunken in to the last drain  
That poisonous Spirit of Death which fills it  
wholly. . . .

The flesh that crept like worms is growing numb ;  
The raging fire of blood is dying cold ;  
The rout of fiendish thoughts are almost dumb :  
The heavens fade like a Vision cycles-old,  
Where from dead eyes gaze thoughts uncompre-  
hended :

Thank God, I soon shall cease to be alone ;  
My mad discordant life is nearly blended  
With all this realm's unsuffering death of stone.



## PART III.

## THE JUDGMENTS.

## I.

A multitudinous roaring of the ocean !  
Voices of sudden and earth-quaking thunder  
    From the invisible mountains !  
The heavens are broken up and rent asunder  
    By curbless lightning-fountains,  
Streaming and darting through that black commotion,  
In which the moon and stars are swallowed with  
    the sky.  
Throughout the Mausolean City spread  
Drear palpitations, long-drawn moan and sigh ;  
And then—an overwhelming whirlwind blast ?  
Or else, indeed, the irrepressible cry  
Of all its statues waking up aghast !  
Doth God in final Judgment come thus heralded ?

## II.

I saw Titanic forms dark, solemn, slow, ·  
Like thunderclouds imperious o'er the wind,  
Sweep far with haughty trappings to and fro ;  
I heard great voices peal and trumpets blow :  
Strange fragments of their chanting shook my mind.

"If the owl haunts doleful ruins and lives in the  
     sombre night,  
 Could it joy in the cheerful homes of men, could  
     it love the noonday light?  
 If the serpent couches in jungles and deserts of  
     burning sand,  
 Would it rather cast its slough in the peopled  
     corn-rich land?  
 If the great bear prowls alone in desolate wastes  
     of ice,  
 Could it joy to range in herded power through  
     a tropic Paradise?  
 If the vulture gorges on carrion and all abhorrent  
     things,  
 Would it rather slake with fruits and wine the rush  
     of its obscene wings?

. . . . .

"We sought through the archives of Fate, through  
     all the records of Doom,  
 Records of noontide refulgence, records of light-  
     ning-seared gloom:  
 And lo, we have never found while the highth and  
     the depth we explored,  
 We have never yet traced out Punishment or Reward.

. . . . .

"Peace may be happy and sweet; bitter and  
     heart-rending Strife;  
 Sin is corruption and death, Virtue is health and life:

But every being is placed in that sphere, in that  
crisis, that spot,

Which alone its own nature demands and asserts  
for its lot :

As itself from itself its web the spider spins out,  
Doth each all the net of relations which weave it about :  
The sun shines the sun by the lustre he lavishes forth ;  
For his might and his life and his light circles  
round him the earth :

All the World—this infinite azure robe sphere-  
spangled sublime,

In which God walks forth revealed and veiled to  
the creatures of Space and Time,

Is all interwoven in one (each atom, each star, as  
each soul,

Evolving so duly the threads of its work for its  
part in the Whole) :

With a woof and warp of might and light and  
mysteries all is wrought,

For the many-figured, many-hued being and passion  
and thought.

. . . . .

“Here hath a spirit full bliss to breathe ever-bland  
golden air ;

Here hath a spirit wild hurrying storms of doubt,  
dread, anguish, despair :

For the world-realms are swept on their path for  
ever, through day and night ;

And their course is advanced no less, no more, in  
 the gloom than in the light :  
 And the journey is infinite truly,—through every  
 various clime  
 Do the countless myriads wander on, through every  
 season of time ;  
 Cool water for him in the desert-blaze, red fire for  
 him in the frost,  
 Languor for him in the summer-peace, fierce heart  
 for the tempest-tost :  
 While all whence they know not whither they know  
 not wend ;  
 Who appraiseth the means and progress, who con-  
 ceiveth the end ?  
 But we swear by the Life Eternal, we swear by  
 Eternal Death,  
 We swear by the Fate supreme which rules in every  
 pulse and breath ;  
 That strong or weak, simple or wise, polluted or  
 most holy,  
 Each each day is fed with the food befitting him fully  
 and solely.”

### III.

Again deep peace, again the stars and moon :  
 I stood between the theatre and square,  
 Beholding as before the statues there  
 Unstirred and silent in the lethal swoon.

Lo ! in the empyréan grew a light—

A great and awful Splendour, through its shroud  
Of fold on fold of massy thundercloud  
Intensely burning down with steadfast might.

Wherefrom a Voice descended vast and lone ;  
Of thunder-dreadfulness, of sea-fierce anger,  
Yet in its lofty silver-volumed clangour  
Chanting an unimpassioned monotone :

“ WHEN ALL THE WINE IS POISONED IT MUST BE  
DESTROYED UTTERLY ;  
THE VESSELS ALSO WHICH CONTAINED IT MUST  
BE BURNED AND GROUND TO DUST.”

Instantly shudderings shook the stony crowd ;  
Some rigid arms with writhing spasms were lifted,  
Some dungeon-throats with frenzy-spasms rifted  
By hideous strangled voices shrieking loud :

“ Abominable Fate,  
We hurl thee back thy hate !  
The poison and the wine—  
Our sins and souls are thine !  
Ah ! pangs of utter death  
Stifle our breath—  
Hear us ; we plead ; hear us ; oh, wait ! ”

No answer came save trumpet-voices blaring  
Death and destruction as in furious fray ;  
And while those forms gasped out their cry  
despairing

They sank down crumbling into dusty spray.  
Then, as the trumpet clamours died away,  
Did crash on crash in clear succession sound,  
Like lingering peals of thunder ; each the  
knell

Of house or column falling to the ground  
In sudden ruin, as those statues fell.

And next, as if the solid hills were all  
Disseated now to glide tremendously  
Over the town and plunge athwart the sea,  
A mass of gloom enveloped in its pall  
Temple and palace, basement, dome and spire ;  
Then o'er the marble crowd submerging came :  
Its black oppression burned throughout my  
frame,

A torture of intolerable fire.

Yet when at length its ponderous bulk was  
rolled

Over the shrinking waters out of sight,  
The City and the steadfast statues white  
Stood all unchanged about me ; but, behold,  
The uttered condemnation had been wrought  
Upon the ruined fragments,—they were naught.

## IV.

That cloud-consuming fire still held the sky,  
Blotting its worlds out wholly ; while the  
sphere  
Seemed listening breathless in an awful fear,  
Till that great Voice again rang forth on high :

“WHEN NOW THE SAPLESS TREE BEARS BLOOM  
NOR FRUIT,  
WHY LINGER TRUNK AND ROOT?  
LET IT BE HEWN AWAY AND FIRE-DESTROYED ;  
AND IN ITS PLACE LEFT VOID  
A LIVING TREE BE SET TO SPREAD AND RISE,  
RESPONSIVE TO THE BOUNTY OF THE SKIES.”

The sentence smote some statues like a sword ;  
With nerveless gestures pitiful to see  
They moaned their helpless hopeless litany,  
“We lived, we lived, O great and dreadful Lord !”

Then as they crumbled into dust away,  
The Answer speeded from the hills behind,—  
A noise of rushing like a mighty wind :  
The ashen fire-flood in a tempest grey  
Hissed through the City and the wan array ;

And hurrying o'er the sea, as if its might  
With grim joy hasted to fulfil such trust,  
Swept all the human and palatial dust  
To irretrievable Chaos, Death and Night.

And when that deadly storm of fire was past,  
A Voice came roaring like its final blast :

“WHOSE VIRTUE CANNOT PAY THEIR LIFE'S  
EXPENSE,  
WHOSE SOULS ARE LOST IN SENSE,  
THEY ARE NO MORE ; THEMSELVES WITH GOD  
HAVE WILLED,—  
THEIR ÆON IS FULFILLED.”

## v.

Once more that fire possessing sole the sky,  
Once more deep silence o'er the lessened throng  
Of waiting statues ; and it lasted long  
Ere that great Voice again pealed forth on high :

“WHEN HE WHO HAD A PALACE AND ITS POWER,  
WELL-FAVOURED FOR HIS DOWER,  
HAS PROVED UNJUST AND PROUD, HAS SPENT  
ITS TREASURES  
ON SELFISH POMPS AND PLEASURES ;



HE MUST DESCEND FROM HIS EXALTED PLACE :

YET, IF IN DEEP DISGRACE

HE DO NOT SINK STILL DEEPER, TILL HIS BREATH

BE WHOLLY QUENCHED IN DEATH ;

BUT LEARN TO BUILD AGAIN HIS KINGLY HEART,

THE THRONE AWAITS HIM AND THE KINGLY PART."

Ah ! what a multitude of statues then

Were shaken by the thunder of this doom !—

"O Lord ! all perish if Thou wilt consume

In justice ! Lord have mercy on frail men !"

Ev'n as the crash of smitten structures roared

The answering Judgment-terrors filled the sky :

Inexorably swift it streamed and poured

A red-fire deluge from that cloud on high,

Which drowned the City and the multitude,

Devouring all the space from hills to sea,

Hissing and roaring the resistless flood

Plunged through the trembling earth, in haste to flee

With its vast ravage ; and the earth gaped wide

To swallow in that cup of wrath amain,

Then gnashed her seared and riven jaws to hide

What shook her yet with shuddering throbs of pain

How many had become the torrent's prey,

Swept down abrupt into some lower sphere !

But of the rest—can vision cheat me here ?

What forms are these amidst the wan array

Of human marble? Strange new stony forms—  
 These serpents, panthers, wolves, these apes and  
     swine,  
 Vultures and hawks and owls, with sheep and kine,  
 And many others, brutes and birds and worms,  
 Couched in unutterably piteous rest,  
 The sorcery of that Judgment-fire attest.

## VI.

No more wild agonies shook the steadfast Earth ;  
     That night of cloud, unable to sustain  
     Its soul of fire, was withering ; when again  
 Upon the silence that great Voice flowed forth :

“WHEN HE WHO SHOULD HAVE TRAVELLED ALL  
     THE DAY,  
     HAS LINGERED ON HIS WAY  
 TO SPORT WITH IDLERS ; OR IN COMMON FEAR  
     OF LONE PATHS STEEP AND DREAR,  
 HAS TURNED ASIDE TO PACE DOWN CROWDED  
     ROADS  
     OF RICH AND GAY ABODES ;  
 HE MUST PLOD THIS DAY’S JOURNEY ON THE MORROW  
     WITH WEARY RUE AND SORROW,  
 ERE HE CAN WIN HIS HAPPY HOME, AND GREET  
     THE DEAR FRIENDS WAITING FOR HIS LAGGARD  
     FEET.”

Whereunto statue-voices low implored :  
“Free human fellowship is very sweet ;  
Bitter with our own kind as foes to meet—  
Heavy the load of uncompanioned life !  
Alas, we are so weary-sick of strife !  
Grant us awhile Thy perfect peace, O Lord !”

The humble plainning of that saddest prayer,  
Relapsing into stony silentness,  
So filled my heart that I was unaware  
Until surrounded by its sway and stress,  
How the deep Ocean rushing from its lair  
Bellowed against the hillslopes planted broad ;  
Whilst fierce from sea-vast cloudglooms in the  
air,  
Blazoned with dreadful sentences of God  
In writhed and quivering lightnings wrought, the  
rain  
Intense of swerveless thunderbolts streamed down,  
Crashing amidst the ruins of the town,  
And shrieking through the loud inundent main.

## VII.

The flood below, the flood above ebbed soon  
Completely ; fair and still the green earth lay,  
Beneath a heaven surcharged with tenfold day,  
More holy-sweet of lustre than the moon.

I gazed : the statues stood there as before,  
 Like dateless boulders by the old sea-shore :  
 But of the City's vast palatial pride  
 Of all the works of Man on every side—  
 The theatre's stupendous cirque of tiers,  
 The pharos and the galleons and the piers,  
 Remained no vestige ; save that here and there,  
 Bathed in the sea of crystal-lucent air,  
 Some fragment wall, some column cleft stood dim,  
 More like stranger rocks than structures reared by Him.  
 Had that swift deluge been the stream of Time,  
 And every billow some vast age sublime,  
 Over the vacant City flowing ever  
 Until a mind should swoon in the endeavour  
 Such infinite cycles of its course to mete,  
 ERASURE had been scarcely more complete.

## VIII.

The cloud was vanished from the perfect sky ;  
     Heaven earth and sea all floated from my sight,  
     Bathed in a dimness of exceeding light  
 Too pure, intense, and calm for mortal eye.

And yet I saw as we may see in trance,—  
     Saw how a gradual change beatified  
     The statues who had never yet replied  
 When those dread Judgments took dread utterance.

As Memnon woke to music with the dawn,  
They in the solemn splendour seemed to rouse  
From death to life, with glory on their brows ;  
A calm grand life, eyes shut and breath undrawn.

The crystal sea of sky then streamed away,  
The inmost Heavens revealed themselves abroad:  
A Throne . . . the Vision of the Living God . . .  
Ravished and blind upon the earth I lay.

Once more a Voice descended vast and lone,  
The Voice of Infinite Love Omnipotent ;  
Sweeter than life or death, it swelled and blent  
The Universe all tuned into one tone :

“THE SOLDIER WHO HAS FOUGHT THE NOBLE FIGHT,  
PERSISTENT FOR THE RIGHT,  
ENDURING ALL AND DARING ALL TO PROVE  
HIS GLAD UNPURCHASED LOVE  
AND FAITHFULNESS, IN TRIUMPH AND DEFEAT :  
WHAT DOOM FOR HIM IS MEET ?

THE BATTLE, WITH THE DAY IT FILLED, IS DONE ;  
THE FIELD IS LOST OR WON :  
LET NIGHT THEN GREET HIM WELL WITH JOY AND  
REST  
BY HOLY VISIONS BLEST ;  
THAT ON THE MORROW HE MAY RISE UP STRONG  
HOPEFUL AND FRESH AND YOUNG,

HIS SHARP WOUNDS HEALED, TO DO AND DARE  
ONCE MORE

HEROIC AS BEFORE,—

BUT WITH A LOFTIER RANK, WITH NOBLER POWER,  
WITH FAR MORE GENEROUS DOWER.

AND SO FOR EVER THROUGH THE NIGHTS AND  
DAYS

WHILE HE REMAINETH LORD OF HIS OWN PRAISE,  
HE MAY GO ON, EXALTED MORE AND MORE,  
TILL FINAL TRIUMPH CROWN THE FATEFUL WAR ;  
TILL LOVE AND LIFE AND BLISS (WHICH ONCE  
WAS FAITH)

HAVE VANQUISHED WHOLLY EVIL, FALSEHOOD,  
DEATH ;

THE LOFTIEST STATION THAT HIS SOUL CAN FILL,  
THE UTMOST SWAY COMMENSURATE WITH HIS WILL,  
THE ALL OF WISDOM THAT HE CAN BELIEVE,  
OF LOVE AND GOODNESS THAT HE CAN RECEIVE,  
ARE THEN HIS DOWER FROM THE REACHLESS  
THRONE

AND HIM WHO REIGNS ETERNALLY THEREON."

#### IX.

I heard it all,—there prostrate on the ground ;  
I floated in the Voice as in a sea,  
Or as a cloud may float dissolvingly  
Within the sapphire noontide's burning bound.  
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And when it ebbed it left my shrinking soul  
To shudder back into its cave of clay,  
Blind, hopeless, one dead atom fallen astray  
From vital union in and with the Whole.

After a time, from such fierce consciousness  
Of personal being as is lunacy—  
As not to know is perfectly to be—  
I was withdrawn by human utterances :

“O Lord ! let us be hidden, let us die !  
Thy love and wisdom are too infinite !  
We throb unpeaceful in Thy perfect light,  
Star-specks of gloom no Sun can glorify.

“Were we less dark than our old midnight  
sphere,  
Transplant us not into Thy blinding day.  
Lord, we adore Thee, Perfect, Sole, for aye—  
Our sins and weakness crush our spirits here !”

x.

No answer sounded. I arose and stood.  
The gates of Heaven were shut, the Vision gone :  
But still undimmed miraculously shone  
That tenfold noon of glareless sanctitude.

They stood—the Spirits who had conquered life ;  
 Erect, yet pleading, hands uplifted, there ;  
 Glorious—yet wan with that divine despair :  
 Was *this* the crowning issue of the strife ?

The noble faces slowly turned to where  
 The dim hills floated, exquisitely drawn  
 Or interfused, like breathless streaks of dawn,  
 Upon the breathless ocean of wide air.

Thereon uplifted stood a lofty band ;  
 Some burning with the glory of their wings ;  
 Some golden-crowned and purple-robed like  
 Kings ;  
 Some clad in white, a palm-branch in the hand ;

Some like stern warriors armed with shield and  
 sword ;  
 Some swaying crystal cups in which the fire  
 Of red wine quivered ; while a radiant quire  
 Striking their harps sang loud with sweet accord.

# XI.

“ Dear Friends, come ! we wait for you ;  
 Strong and wise and pure and true.  
 Why, alas, ascend so few ?



“Where are the myriads that should now be  
here ?

How have they wasted all the lavish dower  
With which God fitted them to rule their sphere—  
The Passion and the Vision and the Power ?  
For ever hoping, disappointed ever,

We know too well the constant tragic doom :  
Vision hath seen, with scarce a work-endeavour,  
Then closed its eyes for more voluptuous gloom ;  
Passion hath disenshrined the awful soul,  
Its large heart tempting fatal fleshly lusts ;  
And Power hath shaken off divine control,  
To gorge itself with universal trusts.

“For the undone Many, ruth,  
Ye have conquered, true to truth ;  
Dare our wine of Joy and Youth.

“The tree whose trunk and branches dark and  
bare

Withstood the storms of Winter, planted strong ;  
Doth glorify itself in summer's air

With leaf and fruit and nested bird's blithe song :  
The earth-realm labouring blind and dumb and  
cheerless,

Yet ever onward, through the reign of night ;  
Leaps forth with joy majestically fearless  
Into the pure new heaven of morning light.

Again stern Winter with its storms shall come,  
 But find the tree grown stronger 'gainst its  
     wrath ;  
 Again the night-gloom, weary, blind and dumb,  
 But find the realm far forward on its path.

“Then, dear Friends, come, come away !  
 Now is Summer, now is Day ;  
 Joy assumes imperial sway !”

## XII.

As when the warm spring-breezes overblow  
     Some silent, frozen, melancholy main,  
 Its waters heave and throb and rend their chain,  
 And singing in the sunbeams flash and flow :

So with the breathing of that gracious song  
     Those Spirits burst their trance of silent sad-  
     ness ;  
 Their bosoms heaved with glorious life and  
     gladness ;  
 Clear-eyed, erect, full-voiced, advanced their throng :

“ O Brothers of this Heaven supreme and glorious !  
     O Sisters of this greeting full of love !  
 Into what a dawn of perfect day victorious,  
     Do ye usher us, and welcome us above !

The World o'erflows with life serene and tender ;  
The air, the light is all celestial wine ;  
Our inmost soul is interfused with splendour  
And harmony divine !

“ As birds the boundless azure sky-deep winging,  
As breezes flowing round and round the earth,  
As flowers into the vernal welcome springing,  
As fountains leaping seaward bright with mirth ;  
Our thoughts throughout Infinity float chainless,  
Our souls encompass spheres of life sublime,  
Our beings thrill and glow with new life stainless,  
Our swift joy laughs at Time !

“ The worlds go wheeling far their cycled courses,—  
From the fathomless Unbirth of the Abyss,  
By golden laws attuning counter-forces  
Built up into the noonday Heaven of Bliss :  
And pervading all, sustaining all, enwreathing  
With its infinite embrace beneath, above,  
The Æther—the Divine eternal breathing  
Of Life and Light and Love ! ”

### XIII.

So singing they advanced with measured pace ;  
And like a silver morning-mist were drawn  
Slow floating up the hillside wood and lawn,  
Unto that high seraphical embrace.

All stood triumphant, beautiful, divine,  
Between the heaven and earth ; all stood there  
bright ;  
Informed, transfigured with the holy light  
As crystal cups with sacramental wine.

I would have stood there evermore and gazed  
Entranced in adoration, consciousness,  
Upon that beauty of all holiness  
In human forms embodied and upraised.

Alas ! the universal light too soon  
Was fading, flowing backward to its fount,  
Until they stood upon that sombre mount  
Sole-shining o'er the dark earth as a moon.

And still the glory-stream flowed back to God ;  
And they with it were floated up the sky ;  
Whose gates shut blank against my straining  
eye,  
And left the earth a dark and soulless clod—

Left all the earth like some most desolate shore  
Wherefrom has ebbed the free and living tide ;  
And left me stranded on its dark waste wide,  
A wreck to be recovered nevermore.

O Life! this is thy deepest woe of all—  
That as a soul regains its heaven of birth,  
The body drags it swooning back to earth,  
Stunned, hopeless, blind with its tremendous fall.

## XIV.

When I arose the ever ancient Night  
Filled with his sombre pomp the earth and sky :  
No memories of that doom of dire affright  
Perturbed the calm ; and undismayed on high  
The moon and stars where they had shone before  
Shone on in cold and stern sublimity.  
The hills loomed dark upon the silent shore,  
Round which the waves in thoughtful monotone  
Rolled their old voice of *Ever—evermore*.  
A royal City dwelt upon this throne,—  
And what now left of all its wealth and pride?  
A few strange groups of pallid-gleaming stone !  
But Nature cares not for the ruin wide,  
Her dreaming beauty glows in perfect bloom :  
Most cold, imperial, unlamenting Bride,  
Her Lord and Bridegroom scarcely in the tomb. . .  
The moon sank slowly down from heaven's  
crest ;  
Pale radiance lined and flecked the eastern gloom ;  
A stir, a breathing thrilled the world's deep rest ;  
No wakening bird, half-wakened, here and there

Uttered uncertain warning from its nest ;  
 But spread a cold and fresh and fragrant air,  
     That seemed with life-ful breath to cleanse  
         away

The grosser shades and vapours everywhere,  
 And all memorials of the night's dismay,  
     That pure and odorous the earth might greet  
 The first divine embraces of the Day,  
 Now hurrying up the heavens with fiery feet,  
     The crown of burning gold upon his head,  
 Cloud-robed with gold and purple, light and heat. . . .  
 Ages on ages in their course have shed

Ruin of fire and tempest on the earth,  
 Uncounted æons of her sons are dead ;  
 Yet she exults with aboriginal mirth,  
     Nor feels her frame grow weak, her blood grow  
         cold,

But pure and strong and young as at her birth  
 When first God's hand her glorious path out-  
     rolled :

For day by day He seals her with His sign—  
 Night's tomb is rent, the gates of heaven unfold  
 To let the ever-youngest Dawn divine,

Bathe her in balms of sempiternal youth.  
 I think no human soul which here doth pine  
 In personal anguish and with general ruth,  
     Without these Dawn-evangels fresh from God  
 Could feel its immortality a truth.

Dear are all dawns ; but this that coming trod

The eastern heavens to kiss the earth's pale brow  
With heavenly benedictions, when the rod  
Of the Avenging Justice was but now

Withdrawn from penal smitings dire !—what  
speech

That mortals use, what words of lofty vow  
Or soaring chant can emulate and reach

The awe, the bliss, the gratitude, the love,  
That saving dawn brought with it from above ?

xv.

What a dawn ascendeth fair through the pure and  
silent air,

Fain to greet with holy rapture what a glorious  
virgin Earth !

From her sins and fears and woes, from her  
memories, by the throes

Of a fierce regeneration born anew in perfect birth !  
But what forms, what forms are they, there between  
the sea-loved bay

And the spiritual hills with the woods that clothe  
their feet ;

Human forms erect in power, beasts that crouch  
and birds that cower,

But all wrought in fadeless marble, white and  
shining, pure and sweet ?

Lo! as ever more and more broadening out the  
dawn doth soar,  
Kindling emerald purple golden quivering splendours  
round her way ;  
What a flush—as if of Life kindling with triumphant  
strife  
Through the torpid marble—fires them, though  
they all so steadfast stay !  
Lo! as ever more and more music with the dawn  
doth soar,  
Breezes whisper, leaflets murmur, waters warble  
joy for day ;  
What a thrill—as if of Life stirring with triumphant  
strife  
Through the rigid marble—heaves them, though  
they all so silent stay !  
These are forms that couch and stand, still as marble  
fountains grand,  
.Still in meek victorious patience, till the Sea of  
Life arise ;  
Till the World-sustaining Sea, Soul of all Eternity,  
Once more fill them with Its waters of the Life  
that never dies.  
When the Royal Sun shall leap glorious on yon  
eastern steep,  
Gazing grand athwart this province of his  
measureless domains ;



Straightway at that conquering sign, straightway  
at that glance divine,  
Soul shall fill them, stone incarnate, life-blood  
gush through all their veins.  
And this Nature which doth dream in Titanic sloth  
supreme,  
Hill and river, wood and meadow, heaven of  
azure, careless sea,  
Shall have all its want fulfilled, strength employed  
and bosom thrilled  
By a lordly domination—soul and thought and  
passion free.  
Oh, that these who in this hour shall attain such  
solemn dower,  
Consecrated Lords and Bridegrooms wedding  
this fair virgin Earth,  
Have such holy strength of will, love, faith, truth  
unquenchable,  
Wisdom, justice, making concord of inheritance  
and worth,  
As shall give a nobler being from the blissful marriage birth !

## XVI.

As one who in the morning-shine  
Reels homeward, shameful, wan, adust,  
From orgies wild with fiery wine  
And reckless sin and brutish lust :

And sees a doorway open wide,  
And then the grand Cathedral space ;  
And hurries in to crouch and hide  
His trembling frame, his branded face.

The organ-thunders surge and roll  
And thrill the heights of branching stone ;  
They shake his mind, they crush his soul,  
His heart knells to them with a moan :  
He hears the voice of holy prayer,  
The chanting of the fervent hymn ;  
They pierce his depths of sick despair,  
He trembles more, his eyes are dim.

He sees the world-wide morning flame  
Through windows where in glory shine  
The saints who fought and overcame,  
The martyrs who made death divine :  
He sees pure women bent in prayer,  
Communing low with God above :—  
*Too* pure ! what right has *he* to share  
Their silent feast of sacred love ?

How can he join the songs of praise ?  
His throat is parched, his brain is wild :  
How dare he seek the Father's gaze,  
Thus hopeless, loveless, and defiled ?

How taint the pureness—though he yearn  
To join such fellowship for aye? . . .  
He creeps out pale—May he return  
Some time when he shall dare to stay !

As he within that holy fane,  
Was I upon that solemn shore ;  
One murky cloud, one spoiling stain,  
One jarring note,—all these and more :  
A Spectre from the wicked Past,  
Familiar with the buried years ;  
The joys that fade, the griefs that last,  
The baffled hopes, the constant fears ;

The fair, fair dawn of many a day  
That sinks in storm-clouds red and wild ;  
The souls that in their huts of clay  
Are crushed and buried, all defiled ;  
The Lusts that rage like savage steeds,  
While Will with reinless hand sleeps on,  
And drunken Thought but goads their speeds,—  
Then one mad plunge, and all is gone ;

The Moods that strew palm-branches now  
And with Hosannas fill the sky,  
Then shortly crown with thorns the brow  
And mock and scourge and crucify ;

The error, guile and infamy,  
 The waste of foul and bloody strife,  
 The unforeseen catastrophe,  
 That make the doleful drama, Life.

Ah, what had I to do with these  
 Young lovely souls serene and clear,  
 Awaking up by fine degrees  
 To life unsullied as its sphere ?  
 The Spectre that has roamed forlorn,  
 Sin-restless, through the sombre night,  
 Must creep to its old grave at morn,  
 Nor blot the world of life and light.

## XVII.

Where I had left it, on the lonely strand,  
 Uninjured lay my boat, and lovely ; seeming  
 Some fair sea-creature, of the midsea dreaming  
 To light foam-whispers on the yellow sand.

While yet we skimmed the wavelets of the  
 bay,  
 Methought there rose, ev'n as the sun arose,  
 A vehement Chorus hurrying to its close—  
 Fresh as the breath of the awakened day.

With vital fires the morning seemed to glow  
While it rang onward like a trumpet-blast  
Of keen reveillé crying : NIGHT IS PAST !  
AROUSE YE DREAMERS, TO THE DAY AND FOE !

The stars for ever sweep through space, surrounding  
Their sun-kings and God's central hidden Throne  
With splendour and deep music far-resounding,  
Though heard by pure celestial ears alone :  
Their music chants His lofty praise for ever,  
Their splendours burn to Him the Light Divine ;  
In their grand uneager motions pausing never,  
They live and sing and shine.

Eternally they sweep on their vast courses,  
With solemn joy fulfilling His behest ;  
While the balance of stupendous counter-forces  
Buildeth up a stable Infinite of rest.  
And the Æther, breathing life through vast pulsations,  
Thrills with rapture to their God-supported flight ;  
And its waves against the rushing constellations  
Break in the foam of light.

Each world-sphere groweth grandly through the ages  
From its lifeless weltering unsubstantial birth,  
Through unnumbered fiery throes and cyclic stages  
Till it shines in heaven a life-abounding earth ;

Till its vapours are green fields and glorious  
oceans,

Till with countless living beings it is rife :  
By harmony constraining dread commotions  
It is crowned and thronged with life.

Until conscious, doubting, worshipping Immortals,  
As they journey on their infinite Life-way,  
Passing through its Birth and Death mysterious  
portals

Inform with spirit-fire the clothing clay :  
And the dead, spectral, consciousless Material  
Is a dwelling-place for essences divine ;  
Throbs with thought and passion deathlessly  
ethereal,  
A Heaven-honoured shrine.

All spirits from their infancy's bland sleeping  
Must struggle to a strong and noble prime  
Through sins, dangers, anguish, terrors,—ever  
reaping

Costly fruits in every season of swift Time :  
From their fountain in its deepest dark founda-  
tion,

Glory-shrouded in the shadow of God's Throne,  
Through all worlds to their highest-soaring station  
By unrest all have grown.

Life *is* only by perpetual on-flowing ;

Torpid rest is the true life-devouring death ;  
Through stern struggles all things ever are up-  
growing ;

Sighs and moanings prove a vital-throbbing breath.  
One alone—Eternal, Infinite, All-holy,

*Is* in changeless rest ; the Perfect grows nor grew :  
Finite souls and all things live by progress solely,  
All *are* but what they *do*.

#### PART IV.

#### THE RETURN.

##### I.

Long tranquil days one more than seven  
The beamless sun from out the main  
Went burning through the vault of Heaven,  
And circled to the deep again :  
While day by day in dreamful ease  
We glided o'er the glistening seas.

Long calm autumnal nights just seven  
The moon with all her starry train  
Went shining through the vault of Heaven,  
And circled to the deep again :  
While night by night in dreamful ease  
We glided o'er the glimmering seas.

Long days so rich in rest, so still ;  
    As warm as love, as calm as truth ;  
Long nights which did those days fulfil,  
    As some sweet girl a fervent youth :  
While day and night in dreamful ease  
We floated o'er the silent seas.

Time set within his circled sky  
    A topaz sun, a diamond moon,  
And thick star-pearls, and made thereby  
    A marriage-ring of blissful boon ;  
With which in ever-dreamful ease  
We floated o'er the happy seas.

Did Nature sleep, and dream in sleep  
    Of all the Spring and Summer toil  
Her children were about to reap,—  
    The wealth of corn and wine and oil :  
As day and night in dreamful ease  
We floated o'er the sleeping seas ?

Or was it her deep-thoughted mood ;  
    A little sad, such loss had been ;  
And grieved, the dear Past seemed so good ;  
    Yet proud, triumphant and serene :  
As day and night in dreamful ease  
We floated o'er the solemn seas ?



I lay in one long trance of rest  
And contemplation,—free from thought  
Of Future issue, worst or best  
To be from Past and Present wrought :  
While day and night in dreamful ease  
We glided o'er the tranced seas.

## II.

Before me, in the drowsy night outspread,  
The City whence in anguish I had fled  
A vast dark Shadow loomed :  
So still, so black, it gloomed,  
It seemed the darkness of a great abyss  
Gulfed in a desert bare ;  
Around whose precipice  
Dim lamps burnt yellow in the vacant air,  
Lifted on high portentous. Yet to me  
Its dark suggestions were of Life, not Death ;  
Its awful mass of life oppressed my soul :  
The very air appeared no longer free,  
But dense and sultry in the close control  
Of such a mighty cloud of human breath.  
The shapeless houses and the monstrous ships  
Were brooding thunderclouds that could eclipse  
The burning sun of day ;  
Surcharged with storms of such electric life,  
Keen as the lightning to its chosen prey,  
Curbless and dreadful when aroused to strife. . .

Who once has gazed upon the face of Death  
Confounds no more its calm with calmest Sleep ;  
The terror of that beauty shadoweth  
His spirit with an influence too deep.

## III.

And while I gazed upon the sleeping City,  
And pondered its unnumbered destinies,  
A flood of awe and fear and love and pity  
Swelled in my heart and overflowed my eyes  
With unexpected tears.

The burden of the message I had brought  
From that great City far across the sea  
Lay heavy on my soul ; as if for years  
And years I had been wandering wearily  
In travail with it : now the time was spent ;  
Now, as a cloud with fire and thunder fraught,  
I must give birth with throes of agony,  
And perish in the bearing. So I leant  
Back in the boat, all desolate and distraught,  
Pangs shuddering through the faintness of cold fears :  
Death passed his hand across my brow ; but went  
To lay its plenary pressure on some heart  
That throbbed true life—"for this poor pulse,"  
thought he,  
"Is not worth quelling"—I watched him depart  
Bearing all peace with him ; when suddenly

That Spirit which will never be withstood  
Came down and shook and seized and lifted me,—  
As men uplift a passive instrument  
Through which to breathe whatever fits their  
mood,  
Stately triumphal march or war-note dread,  
Anthem, gay dance, or requiem for the dead ;  
And through my lips with irrepressible might  
Poured forth its own stern language on the night.

## IV.

“Haughty and wealthy and great, mighty, magnificent, free,  
Empress in thine own right of the earth-surrounding sea !  
Broad and deep flows the river that feedeth thy  
mighty heart,  
Bringing from all the zones to crowd thine imperial  
mart  
Of all their produce the best—their silks, their  
gems, their gold,  
Their fruits and corn and wine, their luxuries  
thousand-fold :  
Thy merchants are palaced princes, thy nobles  
scorn great kings,  
Thy meanest children swell with pride beneath  
thy shadowing wings ;

And thy voice throughout the world, complacently  
serene,

Proclaims 'Of all my Sisters, I am the rightful  
Queen !

This one is blind, this deaf, and that other is but  
a mute ;

This one is fair indeed, but drunken and dissolute ;

This is a very slave, dishonoured long ago ;

This one is dying of age, that other of want and woe ;

This one is proud and great, but a heathen in her soul,

And subject to fatal frenzies, raging beyond control :

But I, I am rich and strong, I am wise and good  
and free ;

Throned above them, Empress sole of the earth-  
surrounding Sea !'

"Yes, indeed thy power is great, but thy evil is  
great no less,

And thy wealth is poor to pay the debt of thy  
guiltiness ;

And the world is judged with justice, and thou  
must pass through that fire

Which hath tested so sternly the glitter of Venice  
and Carthage and Tyre :

For no wealth can bribe away the doom of the  
Living God,

No haughtiest strength confront the sway of His  
chastening rod.

Repent, reform, or perish ! the Ages cry unto thee :

Listen, oh listen, ere yet it be late, thou swarthy  
Queen of the Sea !

“Thy heritage vast and rich is ample to clothe and  
feed

The whole of thy millions of children beyond all  
real need ;

One of the two main wheels whereon thy Faith  
doth move

Is that each as he loves himself so shall he his  
neighbour love :

But thy chief social laws seem strictly framed to  
secure

That one be corruptingly rich, another bitterly  
poor,

And another just starving to death : thy fanes and  
mansions proud

Are beleaguered with filthy hovels wherein poor  
wretches crowd,

Pining in body and soul ; untaught, unfed by those  
Who are good if they merely dribble bland alms  
upon fatal woes—

Resigning scarcely aught of their pleasure and  
pride and content,

Nor dreaming that all their life is one huge em-  
bezzlement.

“The sumptuous web of thy trade encompassing  
all the globe  
Is fretted by gambling greed like a moth-eaten robe,  
Is slimed by creeping fraud, is poisoned by false-  
hood’s breath,  
Is less a garment of life than a shroud of rotting death.

“The mass of thy rulers live with scarcely one  
noble aim,  
Scarcely one clear desire for a not inglorious fame ;  
Slaves to a prudence base, idolaters unto Might,  
Jailors of lofty zeal, infidels to pure Right,  
Deaf to the holy voice of the Conscience of the  
World,  
Blind to the banner of God when it floats in the  
storm unfurled ;  
They, and with them the array of thine actual  
Priesthood, thy proud  
And numberless Father-confessors—ineffable crowd  
Of scribes who by day and by night, unceasingly  
blatant, dictate  
Thine every move in the contest with Time the  
Servant of Fate.

“Thy flaring streets each night affront the patient  
skies  
With an holocaust of woes, sins, lusts and blas-  
phemies ;

When thy thousands of harlots abroad with the  
other thousand are met  
Of those who made them first and who keep them  
harlots yet :  
So dreadful, that thou thyself must sometimes  
look for the fire  
That rained from heaven on Sodom to make thee  
one funeral pyre.

“Thy Church has long been becoming the Fossil  
of a Faith ;  
The Form of dry bones thou hast, but where are  
the blood and breath ?  
Dry bones, that seem a whole, with dead sinews  
binding the parts,  
Inert save when bejuggled to ghastly galvanic starts :  
Though thou swearest to thy people, ‘The King is  
but sick, not dead’—  
Gaining the time while you choose you another in  
His stead ;  
Though thy scribes and thy placemen all ; most of  
whom know the fact,  
Vouchsafe in His name to write, pretend by His  
will to act :  
Where are the signs of His life ?—While living  
He never ceased  
To thrill with the breath of His being thy realm  
from the West to the East ;

While He lived He fought with sin, with fleshly  
     lust and pride ;  
 While He lived His poor and mean were wealthy  
     and dignified ;  
 While He lived His reign was freedom, faith,  
     chastity, peace and love ;  
 And the symbol borne on his banner was not the  
     raven but dove ;  
 While He lived there yawned a Hell with a Devil  
     for His foes,  
 And a God-ruled Heaven of triumph before His  
     followers rose ;  
 While He lived the noblest of men were wholly  
     devoted to Him,  
 The saints, the bards, the heroes, in soul and  
     mind and limb,—  
 Who now without a Leader, mournful in silence  
     wait,  
 Girding each one himself to his lonely fight with  
     Fate.

“ But thou, O Queen, art false : a liar, if He is  
     dead  
 And becoming a mammoth fossil whose æon is  
     wholly sped ;  
 A traitor if still He lives and shall for ever reign,  
 For thou spurnest the laws most sacred of all He  
     doth ordain,



Should Christ come now from Heaven, to reap the  
harvest sown

When He buried Himself in the earth, watered  
with blood of His own,

How many Christians indeed could He gather  
with strictest care

From thy two hundred myriads who claim in Him  
a share?

He agonised to save thee and thy children all ;  
And He saveth scarcely enough to delay thy  
deadly fall.

“For fall thou wilt, thou must—so proud as thy  
state is now,

Thou and thy sisters all, scarce better or worse  
than thou,

If ye do not all repent, and cleanse each one her  
heart

From the foulness circling with its blood to poison  
every part.

Woe to thy pampered rich in their arrogant selfish-  
ness ;

Woe to thy brutelike poor who feel but their bread-  
distress ;

Woe to thy people who dare not live without hope  
of wealth,

Who look but to fruits of the earth for their life  
and saving health ;

Woe to thy rulers who rule for the good of themselves alone,  
Fathers who give their children crying for bread a stone ;  
Woe to thy mighty men whose strength is unused or sold ;  
Thy sages who shut their eyes when Truth is stern to behold ;  
Woe to thy prophets who smile Peace, Peace, when it is a sword ;  
Thy poets who sing their own lusts instead of hymns of the Lord ;  
Thy preachers who preach the life of what they feel to be death ;  
Thy sophists who sail wild seas without the compass of faith ;  
Thy traders trading in lies and in human bodies and souls ;  
Thy good men cursing those better who strive on to loftier goals :—  
The final Doom evolveth, burdened with woe on woe,  
Sure as the justice of God while yet by His patience slow ;  
For the earth is pervaded wholly, through densest stone and clod,  
With the burning fire of the law of the Truth of the Living God ;

Consuming the falsehood, the evil, the pride, the  
    lust, the shame,  
With ever-burning, unrelenting, irresistible flame ;  
Until all save the purest spirit, eternal, of truth  
    and love,  
Be altogether consumed away, beneath as well as  
    above."

# RONALD AND HELEN

## PART I.

Most bright and genial noon of Christmas Day !  
The pale blue sky is cloudless, and the sun  
A white intensity of light whose ray  
Is gladness unto all it shines upon :  
Blue-green and foamless swells the tide-filled bay ;  
The remnant morning-mist still hovers dun  
    Above St. Aubin's shore, and through its veil  
    The white-walled houses gleam now tawny-pale.

High on a brig's foremast a boy is singing  
In proud supremacy o'er dread and care,  
His arms in time with his free music swinging :  
How through the ocean of crystalline air  
That young and swift and joyous voice comes  
    ringing,  
Like birdnotes through the summer greenwoods  
    fair !  
What is his Christmas Carol ?—The refrain  
Is " Gra machree ma cruiskeen ;" noble strain !

I lay abed this morning half-asleep  
And half-awake, in drowsy warmth and rest ;  
While tender memories, such as smile and weep  
Over Life's faded flowers in every breast,  
And visionary thoughts, that sometimes steep  
(As sunset-glories steep the greying west)  
    Life's mournful hours in lucent heavenly balm,  
    Came floating at their pleasure through my calm.

And thus at length, amidst the shadowy train,  
A little poem, like a song-bird sweet,  
First nestled in my heart, then in my brain,  
And now exultant with the genial heat  
Lets loose upon the air its simple strain :  
Perchance some gentle hearts whose pulses beat  
    With Love's full symphonies in tremulous chime,  
    Will welcome his least minion's rustic rhyme.

It is not cold bleak winter any more ;  
It is the noon of summer ; and the isle  
Of Cæsaræan Jersey to its core  
Is drunken with the Sun's unclouded smile :  
The sea is steadfast as the glittering shore ;  
We think such water never can beguile  
    Fair boats, rich barques, brave men, to wreck and  
        death,  
    As now it lies unwrinkled by a breath.

She sitteth at the window, lone, alone ;  
Outgazing far across the lustrous bay,  
And through the heavens beneath the sun's high  
    throne ;  
For all her thoughts are wandering far away  
About the regions of some Southern zone,  
As they have wandered many and many a day,  
    Like poor, forlorn, tired, faithful carrier-doves  
With urgent messages for him she loves.

Alas, they cannot come upon his track,  
They know not where he wanders or reclines.  
O India, if you hold him send him back,  
More precious than all jewels of your mines !  
O dreadful Sea, if he has gone to wrack  
Amidst thy wrath, vouchsafe a few sad lines  
    To give her such assurance of his doom  
    That she may go unlingering to the tomb !

Never a single note of him to speak,  
Never a single word by any ship !  
A hectic fire surmounts her pallid cheek,  
A peevish trouble agitates her lip ;  
Through her impatient fingers wan and weak  
The torn-off petals of the white rose slip ;  
    Lividly set, her eyes burn large and bright,  
    But with a painful sleepless desolate light.

She often mutters to her own sick heart ;  
She often mutters to herself alone,  
She often turns her with a sudden start,  
To find herself too surely all alone :  
Anon for weary sighs her pale lips part,  
Anon she singeth in a dreamy moan  
A song whose burden plains throughout the air  
The heavy burden of a life's despair :—

“Adieu, adieu, my ain true Love,  
We must for ever part :  
Though I am not of Douglas sib,  
I bear the bleeding heart,  
My dear,  
I bear the bleeding heart !”

“From all the farthest quarters of the world  
The level snowdrifts of white letters come ;  
With all the steam-cars o'er the safe land hurled,  
With all the ships athwart the wild sea-foam,  
Till every happy wreath at length unfurled  
Melts in the warmth of loving hearts at home :  
And never one white flake to me address,  
To cool the burning fever of my breast !

“O Sun, thou large and lidless eye of fire,  
My soul is withered in thy steadfast gaze ;  
O hot and heavy air I must respire,  
No secret spring this fever-thirst allays ;

O cruel Sea, enmasking thy fierce ire  
With rippling smiles carest by golden rays :  
    I would that I were buried cool and deep  
    From this world-furnace in unwaking sleep !

“I dreamed a dream of superhuman bliss,  
And it has vanished in the day's broad glare ;  
I breathed my soul forth in one rapturous kiss,  
And it has died out in the vacant air ;  
I stretched unheedful o'er a precipice  
To pluck Life's crowning Love-rose,—Oh, how  
    fair !—  
And, all its fragrant beauty unenjoyed,  
I plunge down shuddering through the gulfy  
    void.

“O Ronald, Ronald, wheresoe'er you be :  
Whether lone-sleeping in an alien tomb,  
Or overswept by the remorseless sea,  
Or languid in the richest Orient's bloom  
Breathing delicious life ; I summon thee !  
In body or in soul, whate'er your doom,  
    Come hither ; but one moment ; so that I  
    With consecration of your love may die !

“Perchance some Indian witch hath snared your  
    heart  
With fiery philtres and enwoven wiles



Some swarthy Cleopatra, with the art  
To melt strong manhood in her tears and smiles : \*  
I see you there, all powerless to depart,  
The more her slave the more you learn her guiles ;  
    Draining the wine of that voluptuous sin  
    Which Heaven and Earth seem both well lost  
        to win.

“ Break through her spells, my beautiful, my brave !  
Shake off thy swoon, stand up, and come away !  
Submit no more to be her doting slave,  
Embruted while you grovel in her sway !—  
Alas, alas, how misery will rave !  
Thou art my own true love ; thou art the prey  
    Of no fierce lusts, thou, pure and strong and free,  
    But of the wild waste all-devouring sea.

“ The fair white signal-pennon droopeth down  
Against its flagstaff on the fortress high ;  
The solid serpent-smoke is trailing brown  
A lazy bulk between the sea and sky :  
How many hearts throughout the busy town  
Foresee dear friends or friendly greetings nigh !  
    The flag of truce stills none of all my pains,  
    The serpent’s venom burns through all my veins.

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\* The one priceless pearl Cleopatra dissolved and drank in the wine of her love was the noble manhood of Antony.

“Yet it is hard, O God, to die so soon,  
To feel my life decay before its prime ;  
To perish in May-frosts when sumptuous June  
Is bringing Eden-airs to bless the clime ;  
To have my day eclipsed before its noon ;  
To sleep a widow ere the wedding-time,  
    Down in the cold dark Earth—there truly wed,  
    For Death the Skeleton will share my bed.”

Then all the memories of her happy hours,  
Her girlish hours of hope and health and glee,  
And love a-budding like the other flowers  
When April whispers of the June to be ;  
Of moonlit waters and of sunny bowers  
Ere one went forth upon the desert sea ;  
    Swelled in her heart and filled her eyes, and bore  
    Out through her lips their passionate *Never-*  
    *more !* :—

“O thou happy, happy Island-home,  
    So rich and green and fair,  
Which I and my true-love used to roam  
    Without a thought of care.

O thou many-peopled busy town  
    Upon the broad bay's marge ;  
Into whose full life we went down  
    And felt our life as large.

O the ringing of the hammers on the building ships,  
And the bustle of the pier,  
With the gleaming eyes and the trembling lips  
And the last embraces dear.

O the mile-long sweep of the full tide swell  
Far up the soft white sand ;  
O the flashing of the foam when it scales so well  
The rocks of the Castle grand.

O the flutter of the flakes in the broad bay mouth,  
Like myriads of sea-birds white ;  
O the gliding of the sails in the hazy south,  
Like spirits calm and bright.

O the wondrous mists that enchant the whole,  
And make it what they please,—  
A faërie realm for the dreaming soul,  
Or a wreck beneath dull seas.

O the banks of the golden gorse and broom,  
And the lanes that wind like a burn,  
With the soft snowflakes of the apple-bloom  
Shed thick on their hedgerow fern.

O the slant-stemmed orchards, ripe and old,  
When the rich fruits everywhere,  
Like flames of ruby and globes of gold,  
Burn in the quivering air.

O the sleek and tethered kine that graze  
The valley-bottoms sweet,  
And look up with such long, slow, patient gaze  
As you pass with lingering feet.

O the singing of the larks in the fields of air  
Above the fields of grain,  
When the sky is blue and the clouds are rare,  
And the hedges laugh with rain.

Can it indeed, then, can it be,  
That I so young in years  
Must fade from the land and the air and the sea  
And the heaven of shining spheres?

Must fade away to a joyless ghost,  
Or moulder in the earth,  
While all the world and the starry host  
Live on in their glorious mirth?

From all the life and the beauty part  
Without one loving tear  
Of those eyes that lit the flame in my heart,  
That burns my life out here?

O Father, Father, I beseech  
Before I go but this,—  
To see his face, to hear his speech,  
To feel his fervent kiss!

When he again has sworn the vow  
Which long ago he swore—  
'My Love, I loved you, love you now,  
And must love evermore!':

Then I can breathe my latest breath,  
And feel Thy will be done!  
Assured that in the after-death  
We ever shall be one."

## PART II.

The same hushed vault of dim blue marble sky,  
All over-wandered with its thin white veins;  
The same fixed marble sea whose blue-green  
dye  
Brown sunken rocks enrich with purple stains:  
For still the same despotic sun on high  
In haughty splendour bare and beamless reigns;  
The earth beneath his too impassioned love  
Is Semele embraced with fire by Jove.

What royal vision issues calm and free,  
Making the isle at once her beauty's throne?—  
For all the sphere of earth and sky and sea  
Pavilions not too grandly her alone.

Can this erect and glorious woman be  
The pining girl whose weary heartsick moan  
Fretted the long still hours of yesterday?  
Can that rich life have ever known decay?

With what pure bloom and firm elastic grace  
She glides among the flowers, a flower more fair;  
With what undazzled eyes and dew-fresh face  
She fronts the South in all its quivering glare;  
Her arms stretched forth as if to the embrace  
Of some Olympian lover burning there;  
Her lips just parted, and her bosom's breath  
Suspended in the bliss as calm as death.

Her mother follows her, a matron mild,  
Now panting with astonishment and fear:  
"My poor, poor Helen! my unhappy child!  
What change is this, what madness brings you  
here? . . .  
She heeds me not . . . her look is fixed and wild . . .  
It is your mother speaking to you, dear!  
O God! what terrors hast Thou still in store?—  
She does not know her anguish any more!"

The cry has troubled her serenest trance;  
She turns, and with reluctant effort slow  
Draws back her spirit from the bright expanse  
To comprehend her mother's clamorous woe;

And then with such a strange, calm, pitying glance  
As angels on our sufferings may bestow,

Bends down to kiss her : "Mother, sweet and  
kind,

God has at length restored me my right mind.

Last night I laid a wild, wild burning head  
Upon the pillow whence this morn arose  
A sweet cool shrine of happy thoughts instead :

If I had slept death's slumber from my woes,  
A shroud my sheet, a narrow grave my bed  
(How often have I yearned for such repose !),

And risen to the Heavenly Life, the change  
Could scarcely be more glorious and strange.

Whether in sleep or not I cannot tell—

Ah, life was all one restless dream insane !—

A casual thought like some wind-seedling fell,

And struck firm root within my infirm brain,

And drew up all my soul as by a spell

To feed its strength (and all my soul was fain),

And grew up an oracular vast tree

Whose leaves all murmured, *Oh, the sea! the sea!*

Till I felt stifled in my little room

And could not rest for irresistible yearning ;

But like a ghost that leaves its midnight tomb,

Went forth and hurried forward without turning

Over the hill-paths chequered gleam and gloom,  
And down the snow-white sand, to bathe my burning  
Tumultuous forehead deep in the divine,  
Calm cool refreshment of the deep-sea-brine.

The sands late flooded by the sounding tide  
Wore luminous silver spoil of its retreat ;  
But till I felt the glassy waters slide  
With thin spent whispers round my naked feet  
(The gathering volume of the next wave wide  
Nearing me fast with murmur full and sweet),  
I could not raise my eyes to see indeed  
Being intent alone on my great need.

I looked, I stood : there never was a night  
Of such heart-breaking beauty for despair !  
Our world's one darling and supreme delight,  
Golden Beatitude ! the moon couched there  
'Midst golden-tissued cloudlets ; and her bright  
Serene regard entranced the breathless air,  
And dazzled her old slave, the fawning sea :  
Oh, how the cruel splendour maddened me !

Why linger here, where tireless ripples run  
Enraptured in the glory of her gaze ?  
All lightsome creatures my dark sorrow shun,  
No fiery wine a fiery thirst allays.



But I must reach those low rock-ridges dun,  
Where wrinkled shadows bar the silver rays ;  
    There shall I find some deep dark silent pool,  
    Dark as oblivion, deep as death, grave-cool.

So I walked forth along the pathway paved  
With tremulous lustre ; and no thought of fear  
Or wonder told me of the peril braved :  
And though the light transfixed me like a spear,  
Yet o'er that sea of crystal, many-waved,  
To walk right on into the magic sphere  
    Of that low gorgeous moon, was such a dream  
    As made the pang a too sharp rapture seem.

I reached the ridge ; and as by instinct went,  
Eyeless with dreaming, to the dear old place ;—  
A pebbled floor with small bright shells besprent,  
A pool at lowest ebb when not a trace  
Of moisture in hot noons is elsewhere lent  
To those black calcined rocks that need the grace  
    Of living waters round them, and instead  
    Have white sand-powder thick with worm coils  
    spread.

Here on this sloping ledge we sat alone  
That last sad day, and let the long hours swim  
Unheeded over us ; and like a moan  
From far away each voice gasped strange and dim ;

His eyes were blank, his face was set like ~~stone~~<sup>stone</sup>.  
What now is left me of the place and him ?

A book of lovely, delicate, sanguine weeds,  
A heart of thoughts whose ever/ fibre bleeds.

‘ Here let me lie ; the shadow is so deep,  
‘ The little water is so cold and pure—  
A font baptizing me to blessèd sleep ;  
To slumber which for ever shall endure,  
Being o’ershrouded by the reflux sweep  
Of the great tide ; or else whose balm will cure  
My soul to fitness for this world of life :  
Mysterious prescience soothes my inward strife !

So first I knelt to dip my weary head,  
And then lay down as if the hollow were  
My natural resting-place, my nightly bed ;  
And weedlike on the water streamed my hair.  
Then a strange peace was on my spirit shed ;  
Beyond inert unconsciousness of care :  
I felt the world’s smooth, silent, solemn wheeling ;  
A mystic, restful, and triumphant feeling.

‘ The burning golden Rose of the Day  
Droops down to the Western Sea ;  
And the amber and purple flush of the sky,  
And the crimson glow of the sea,

Ebb, ebb away ; fade, fade and die ;  
While the Earth all mantled in shadowy grey  
Washes her brow with a restful sigh  
In the cool sweet dewes of the gloaming.

‘ Then the shining silver Lily of the Night  
Opens broad her leaves divine,  
Afloat on the azure hyaline  
Of the heavenly sea ; and her purest light  
Kisses the Earth that dreaming lies  
In a still enchanted sleeping ;  
While the heavens with their countless starry eyes  
Still watch are keeping.

‘ The Earth loves the golden Rose of the Day  
From which she distils the fiery wine  
Of immortal youth and magnificent might ;  
But the Sea loves the silver Lily of the Night,  
For her beams are as wands of a holier sway  
Whose spell brings the trance divine :  
The Rose for Life’s feast and the festal array,  
The Lily for Death’s shrine.’

Who was the singer, singing thus alone  
Amidst the tidal rocks, beneath the moon ?  
What gave his voice that mighty murmurous tone ?  
Where had he learned that preternatural tune ?—

Melting all melody into a moan  
Of infinite yearning, then from music's swoon  
    Striding to marshal armies of proud sound  
    Whose trampling shook the earth and filled the  
        air around.

I rose, but gently, gently, not to spill  
A single drop of that enchanted wine  
Brimming my soul ; and crept to where a sill,  
Backed by dark rock from all the gleam and shine,  
Served as a window ; and there settled still,  
And gazed—if one indeed can gaze whose eyne  
    Are fixed in blank dilation, while her ears  
    Drink in oracular rhythms from all the spheres.

Yet in my round of vision, very near  
He sat, and merged in my unconscious sight  
To union with his music in the clear  
Tropical splendour of the liquid light :  
An old, old man, reverend yet not austere,  
Who on a lower rock-ledge sat upright  
    Fronting the moon, and chanting for her grace,  
    While all his soul shone steadfast in his face.

‘ The Earth lay breathless in a fever-swoon  
    Beneath the burning noon,  
Sun-stricken, dazed with light and sick with heat ;

Then came the waters from the cool mid-sea  
Trooping up blithe and free,  
And fanned her brow with airs so fresh and sweet ;  
And crept about her gently and caressed  
Her broad unheaving breast  
With the white cincture of a magic zone ;  
Bathing and swathing her faint limbs, that were  
In the fierce sunfire bare,  
With lucid liquid folds of rich green purple-strown.

‘ Then as the sun went floating to his rest  
Down the enamoured West,  
The waves were leaving the calm earth to dreams ;  
Bearing the smirch of her long day’s turmoil,  
The sweat of her fierce toil,  
The sultry breaths and feverous steams,—  
Bearing all far away, and as they went  
Whispering with blithe content,  
To drown and cleanse them in the pure midsea ;  
The while the Earth all dewy sweet and clean,  
And drowsily serene,  
Beneath the star-dewed heavens might slumber  
safe and free.’

His foam-white hair and beard fell floating down  
In flowing curves like tendril-plants sea-swayed,  
Over his sea-like green-blue silken gown,  
Ample, of ever-shifting gleam and shade.

Upon his knees the mighty hands dark-brown  
Grasped a great chorded shell, whose sleek lips played  
Wild freaks of rainbow lightnings to illumine  
The gorgeous thunders of its hollow womb.

Why speak of hair, harp, hands, when in his eyes  
The wonder dwelt? A small intense lone mere,  
Which under thick tree-shadows airless lies,  
As deep and blackly splendid may appear  
As if the whole night gloom beneath the skies  
Were concentrated in its narrow sphere :  
Such were those orbs, those well-shafts of black  
splendour,  
Through which a soul gazed, solemn, powerful,  
tender.

Deep wells lead down to all-mysterious death,  
Deep eyes lead down to a mysterious soul,  
And both thrill fascination ; but who saith  
What lures us on to plunge for either goal ?  
I dared not stir or speak, and yet my breath  
Hysterically bursting from control  
Cried through his chanting in a plaint forlorn,  
Learnt by the sea-beach one drear winter morn :

‘ Leafless and brown are the trees,  
And the wild waste rocks are brown  
Which the wan green sea so stealthily  
Comes creeping up to drown ;

And the north-west breeze blows chill,  
And the sky is cold and pale ;  
And nevermore from this desolate shore  
Shall I watch my true-love's sail.'

As if indeed, omnisciently aware,  
He had been calmly waiting all the while  
My own announcement of my presence there,  
He turned his glance with an assuring smile,  
And said, 'So young, and singing of despair!—  
What tyranny of fate, what human guile,  
Or what mere folly of your own weak heart,  
Makes you bewail an ever-cureless smart?

'My poor Child ! come and tell me all your woe ;  
And I perchance may find some healing balm :  
Howe'er the billows rage and tempests blow,  
The sea's deep heart lies brooding ever calm :  
Wild waste above may have pure peace below.' . . .  
I knelt there at his feet and felt his palm—  
Palm of a mighty hand—caress my hair,  
As erst the harpstrings, with fine tender care.

And I could tell him all my woe and pain,  
As scarcely I could tell you, mother dear ;  
All the wild dreams that haunted my vexed brain,  
All the sharp agonies of doubt and fear,

All the despair of longings ever vain :  
And as I poured them forth into his ear  
    I felt they never could return to me,  
    But were as torrents drowned in the great sea.

His hand was a strong blessing on my head ;  
His eyes drew out the fever from my soul,  
And filled it all with cool sweet light instead,  
And held me calm in their supreme control  
By some high magic free from awe and dread,  
A spiritual charm ; and when the whole  
    Of my sad tale was sobbed forth, I felt sure,  
    Before he named a remedy, of cure.

Thoughtfully, father-tenderly he smiled,  
And held a moonlike jewel out to me :  
‘This crystal-clear and hollow gem, my Child,  
Contains one pure drop from the deep midsea ;  
And all the ocean-volumes calm or wild  
In all their depth and power and mystery,  
    Clothing the round world with a living robe,  
    Are represented in its little globe.

‘Take it, and seek in it with trustful care,  
Turning it slowly ; and if He you mourn,  
Lord of your life and death, is anywhere  
Within the sea’s dominions—whether borne



Upon its bosom breathing happy air,  
Or buried in its depth a corpse forlorn—  
The blank will stir and breathe until you find  
His image in its magic sphere enshrined.'

I took it, full of faith ; but could not see  
At first,—my hand so trembled, and my eyes  
Were clouded with such rushing mystery  
From my heart's fiery throbbing. But his wise  
Serene regard, steadfastly holding me,  
Soothed and restored ; as tender moonlight lies  
In beautiful calm upon the ocean's breast,  
Enchanting into peace its great unrest.

Upon my open palm the jewel gleamed,  
Faint, semi-lucid, almost colourless :  
I gazed, gazed, turning slowly, till it seemed  
Expanding by soft pulses in the stress  
Of my persistent gaze, whose full light streamed  
Triumphant with prophetic consciousness ;  
Pulse after pulse, wave after wave, poured still  
From eyes protending with imperious will.

A golden star is kindled at its core,  
The spherelet fills with the dissolving light ;  
Gather and shift and vanish shadows hoar :  
It is pervaded with miraculous might,

Swelling in musical triumph more and more :  
Behold ! within and yet beyond our night  
    Another heaven, another sea unfurled,  
    Another vast horizon of our world !

A vault of sky ; the wan moon near its crest  
Fades from those fiery armies of the dawn,  
Whose van is up with golden spears in rest :  
A plane of sea as level as a lawn,  
But sapphire-blue ; upon the far north-west  
A low grey land-cloud delicately drawn ;  
    And in the centre of the faërie sphere  
    A single ship : all steadfast, solemn, clear !

A lonely ship ; through the crystalline air  
I see it as beneath a microscope  
We see an insect, every scale and hair ;  
I hear its panting, and the splash aslope  
Its prow of languid wavelets green :—and there ! —  
Oh, heart be firm, or this fierce shock of Hope  
    Leaping up Bliss, will slay us !—Who is *He*  
    Yearning across the ocean-leagues to me !

Hush, hush ; he murmurs . . . How dark-bronzed  
    and brown  
The face that was so ruddy ! Noble face,  
With lordly lion-locks for golden crown !—  
As pious Moslems in whatever place

Turn always Meccaward when kneeling down  
For adoration of the Throne of Grace,  
He has turned hither, praying steadfast-eyed,  
Leaning impassioned o'er the vessel's side.

Listen ! 'O Helen, this mysterious chain  
Which links us heart to heart, gives mine no rest,  
Dragging with such persistent cruel strain  
As if to tear it bleeding from my breast.  
From utmost India, over land and main,  
It draws me wild with longing to the West :  
What crushing grief, what bitter worldly strife,  
Or inward agony, exhausts your life ?

'I come, I come, Belovèd ! tender heart  
Swooning transfixed ! no wonder mine must bleed,  
Pierced by our sympathy with the same dart.  
I come, I come, to stay you in your need,  
And nevermore in life shall we two part ! . . .  
Lo, with what beautiful and tranquil speed  
The morning drowns the gloom and fires the  
grey,  
And breathes triumphantly night's fears away !'

Oh, murmur sweeter than the sweetest psalm  
On Sabbath eve in Summer, through the air  
Floating with outspread wings that rain pure balm  
On who may through some quiet valley fare !—

How picture-motionless, how crystal-calm  
And crystal-lucid, sea and sky spread there,  
    Ringed by the far horizon's perfect ring ;  
    That lonely ship the only human thing !

I could not dare to break the magic peace  
By crying ev'n to him, my Love so near ;  
But gazed and listened : then a milk-white fleece  
Fell in vast volumes through the æther clear,  
And surged in violent growth and swift decrease ;  
Whereon the suddenly thus-muffled sphere  
    Span round, all ruining in with hollow roar.  
    I cannot, though I try, remember more.

Something there was : that old Sea-god benign,  
Glaucus the wonderful, to whom I raise  
Within my heart a rich and secret shrine  
For floral gratitude and incense-praise ;  
Glaucus, and Ronald, and dear mother mine  
Yourself, seen flitting all before my gaze  
    In glimmering dusk ; strange music stirs sweet  
    bowers :  
    The rest has fled with the swift-flying hours.

With the swift flying hours that bring to me  
My Love, my Own, my Beautiful, my Brave !  
Swift may their flight sweep over the broad sea,  
Soft fall their shadow on the halcyon wave !

The hours are Seraphs bright with holy glee,  
Whom I thought sombre bearers to the grave !  
There is no grave, no death, no gloom of night ;  
The World all overflows with God's pure light."

### PART III.

Nature had roused herself from that still trance,  
Her long siesta in the noon o' the year ;  
Vast clouds had gathered in the dim expanse,  
High gales had swept the brooding atmosphere,  
With thunders and broad lightnings, with the dance  
Of joyous rain upon the meadows sere,  
And trees tumultuous as a roaring tide,  
And wan green bay and livid offing wide.

And now a morning of delicious breath,  
A clear-skied morning full of hope, whose life  
Has no remembrance of past gloom and death,  
Whose peace abjures its birth in stormy strife,  
Welcomes the Wanderer as he entereth  
That noble bay-mouth which for him is rife  
With all the golden treasures of rich youth  
And perfect love, safesealed by perfect truth.

The pathos of dear Memory's best delight  
Had filled his eyes with tender tears before,  
As they came pulsing in the early light,  
Sole on the waves, aslant the happy shore ;

And all the sister islets full in sight  
Unshrouding from their mist-veils thin and hoar  
    Gleamed faintly blue: but now his soul was  
        thrilled  
With fearless triumph of life's end fulfilled.

“O fair green Isle, my Love's delightful nest,  
Deep in this silver branch of the great sea!  
Watched by the royal Lion of the West,  
Safe from the Eagle, 'oure sweete enemy':  
Look,—as a Lion couched in haughty rest,  
Slumbrous but watchful for emergency,  
    Guarding a monarch's threshold night and day,  
Thy Castle lies out massive in thy bay.

“Nest of my Love! the cradles of our birth  
Were rocked to mightier airs than thou hast known;  
Wild winds that raved round hills of gloomy dearth,  
And overswept vast heathery moorlands lone,  
And swayed deep solemn lochs as if old earth  
Were yawning into ruin: every tone  
    Of those sublimest anthems swells once more  
Within me, O our stern dear Mother-shore!

“But youth and youth's Love-Eden, rich and fair  
As that first Eden which the Lord God planted;  
Wherein we wandered sole as the first pair,  
And with the same divine new bliss enchanted;

Are linked with thee for ever, everywhere,  
Sweet islet of the West, whose cool gleams haunted  
The burning splendours of the oldest East  
Shaming the wine of its voluptuous feast.

“Wine of the East ! not wine, but poison, call  
That flood of fire which through the parched frame  
rolls ;

*‘Thou art the wine whose drunkenness is all  
We can desire, O Love ! and happy souls,  
Ere from thy vine the leaves of Autumn fall,  
Catch thee and feed from their o’erflowing bowls  
Thousands who thirst for thy ambrosial dew :’*  
The thousands thirst ; the happy souls how few !

“Thus chants the glorious Seraph ?—And this wine  
Brimming a golden cup was at my lips ;  
Yet I could put away the draught divine  
After the first short, trembling, rapturous sips,  
And leave the great Olympian revel-shine  
And downward fare into the earth-eclipse :  
And after long long years when I return,  
Still my wine waits me, still the star-lamps burn !

“Because the Banquet of the Gods doth last  
For ever and for ever, day and night !  
Because their wine when years on years have passed  
Is fresh as at that instant when its light

Streamed like a ruby chainlet holding fast  
The golden cup to Hebe's wrist curved white ;  
Because his place who once hath sat there blest  
Is never taken by another guest.

"And I did well, and I did well O Love,  
To love yet leave ; do well to now return !  
How should a boy with great gods feast, and  
    prove  
The nectar's inmost potency, discern  
Its subtlest fragrance, feel its ardours move  
Thrilling in slow rich growth until they burn  
    Through all the being in a still desire  
And pure white flame of unconsuming fire ?

"The boy was all too weak : one full-breathed draught  
Had been intoxication ; then dull swoon  
Had drowned remembrance of the nectar quaffed,  
Or left him sated who had dared too soon ;  
While all the ever-glad Immortals laughed  
To see so misapplied their crowning boon :  
    But I come back from years of toil and strife  
    Strong and mature to claim my Feast of Life."

Whercon he shook himself erect, to feel  
The rich blood mantling through his stalwart frame,  
A fervent wine of life from brow to heel ;  
And all his spirit like a pointed flame



Burned out intensely pereceant as the steel  
Flashed from its scabbard at a hero's name,—  
    Burned glittering from his eyes, and darted keen  
    Swift herald fire-thrills to his Love unseen.

He stamped, "But, O my steamer, how you crawl!  
I would your horse-power were a horse indeed,  
Thin-flanked and spur-able! Good hap befall  
This cautious steering, friends; but where's the need  
When thick surf escalades the pier-head wall?  
High tide—the sun mounts high—Oh speed, speed,  
    speed!"

Half hummed half sang he mellowly and low,  
A bathing snatch of mornings long ago.

"O sun, lay down thy golden bridge,  
    Across the waters clear!  
O foam flash round each rock and ridge  
    That soon shall disappear!  
O tide, swell up a full spring-tide  
    Upon the shingly shore!  
For, oh, I love thy surge-sweep wide  
    And long-resounding roar!"

Early she sat; not restless, but in awe  
Trembling at intervals with rhythms of fear;  
As from the leafy window-seat she saw  
The vessel freighted with life's bliss appear,

And slowly to the hidden harbour draw  
Over the joyous waters blue and clear :  
    When still the ship was but a shapeless speck  
    Her true eye fixed Him lordly on the deck.

The mist dissolving in the morning glow  
Still faintly streaked the blue abyss of air,  
And left a purple tinge on all below :  
The well-loved scene looked strange and still and fair,  
As some grand picture painted long-ago,  
Now for the first time brought before her there ;  
    Or some dear dream of childhood now once more  
    Come back as wonderful as heretofore.

If ever she relaxed her vision strong  
Which thus had drawn him from the unknown  
    climes,  
It was to read again with kisses long  
A letter she had read a hundred times,  
And still found always new,—like some old song,  
Some old sweet song of simple passionate rhymes,  
    And more than mortal tenderness—a lay  
    Fit for a wedding and a dying day.

“ Has the old writing startled you, my dear?—  
Old schemes expanding, new ones striking root,  
Threatened to keep me tending year by year ;  
Still as I gathered in one crop of fruit

Finding another ripe,—with long arrear  
Of fresh plantations blossoming to boot :

So wealth grew great, and great wealth's care  
and toil ;

But what became of love in all the coil ?

“ Stunned, snared, deep-smitten !—so my heart  
cried out,

With passionate scorn, imperative demands,  
And blood-dark proofs convicting murderous  
doubt.

My lonely hours became as desert lands  
When hot simoon glares purple through the rout  
Where whirl the columns of the billowy sands :

I felt that I must leave ; yet how arrange

That work should live and grow despite the  
change ?

“ One night the glowing stars and golden moon,  
The perfect fruit of heaven, hung down so bright  
In their unwasting beauty, that a swoon  
Of pure love-longing and divine delight  
Melted me wholly—‘ Thou consummate boon,  
Crown of the fruitage of the Tree of Night,

Fringing cloud-leaves with splendid spray, and  
through

The quiet air distilling nectar-dew :

“ Some swift hours hence my Love’s own islet  
green

Comes floating under the enormous shade ;  
Oh, when she looks to thee, thou heavenly queen,  
Do thou shed blessings down on her ! ’ I prayed ;  
‘ Fill her with shining hope and joy serene,  
Tell her,—He cometh now, no more delayed !  
This message bear, thou white and golden dove,  
Thou light of lovers whom all lovers love ! ’

“ I heard you then cry, *Ronald, come to me !*  
As plainly as I ever heard you speak  
When we together sat, and I might see  
The glorious eyeglow pale the flushing cheek,  
The curved lips falter into utterance free,  
And feel the moist hand quiver strongly weak ;  
I heard your clear voice ringing through the air,  
I felt you straining at my heart-strings there.

“ Whereon I forthwith registered a vow,—  
There was such anguish in the bell-sweet tone—  
To write no single line more, to allow  
My throbbing heart no language of its own,  
Till I could date from—where I date from now,  
Here, on our England’s ever-green sea-throne :  
This vow made short sharp work of all that stood  
Between me and departure, bad or good.

"I started, I am here : what voyage was mine,  
All my long Odyssey (without the zest  
Of lotus, or Calypso more divine),  
Until I passed the Pillars of the West,  
Spare now from scripture's ink for speech's wine :  
When one has reached the Islands of the Blest,  
The perils and the storms he came through seem  
Dim fragments of an interrupted dream.

"Two days for London, or at longest three ;  
I dare not come to you first, knowing well  
That when you once have laid soft hands on me  
I shall be impotent to break your spell :  
Meanwhile for some few hours more I am free,  
And ere they ring my this life's passing-bell  
Would wind up business with the world in  
peace ;  
We make our wills just as our wills must cease.

"But lest you wonder how I dare assume  
That my mad silence pregnant with dismay  
Has not already scared you to the tomb,  
Read this : you tortured me the whole sad way  
To Malta, pallid phantoms stern as Doom ;  
But in the dawning of the perfect day  
That brought us to Valetta, you came forth  
An Angel of glad tidings from the North."

A telegraphic note had followed this,  
“ I come on by the next Southampton mail : ”  
Therefore she read and dreamed in solemn bliss,  
Watching the slow hours through, from when the  
    veil  
Of misty darkness on the deep abyss  
Trembled and opened to the dawnlight pale :  
    And now and then throughout the vigil long  
She murmured dreamily a little song :—

“ A fuchsia lay on the sodden mould ;  
    I stooped, and held it up  
To the morning sun, and a wine of gold  
    Seethed in its purple cup :  
A lucid, lucid golden wine—  
    The dewy bloom of the flower  
By the joyous beams of the morning shine  
    Transfused with mystic power.

“ My heart was lying on a grave ;  
    I dared to hold it up  
To the Sun of Heaven, and a glorious wave  
    Swelled in its purple cup :  
A glowing golden wine of love,—  
    My heart's best blood in the kiss  
Of the living light of the Sun above  
    Burning to perfect bliss.”

## PART IV.

The quiet evening of that day of days  
Held the two lovers walking side by side,  
As slowly as a summer cloudlet strays  
From noon to eve across the heavens wide,  
Or distant barque whereat full long we gaze  
Ere sure its snowy pinions really glide :  
    They paused and loitered in such indolence  
    Of perfect Joy's eternal present tense.

For perfect Joy would hardly care to baulk  
Poor perfect Sadness in her logical fit :  
"Better to walk than run, to stand than walk,  
To sit than stand, to lie down than to sit ;  
And better than to lie awake and talk  
Or think, to lie in dreamless sleep ; and it  
    Is better to lie dead than lie asleep ;  
    Which better is the best we mortals reap."

Three hours of this world's time—such hours as make  
A heavenly life-time each—they lingered through  
The valley winding out to Grève de Lecq,  
Before the placid waters met their view ;  
And much they spoke, yet speech would often slake  
To let the grander harmonies ensue  
    Of Silence—great dumb Poet, overfraught  
    With utterless passion and ineffable thought.

As they turned up the highway, to ascend  
A narrow path amidst the golden gorse,  
A soldier brought his cane down on his friend  
With hearty comradeship's most heavy force,  
" Hammer my eyes, Bill ! why don't you attend ?  
There is a chest for the Victorier Crosss !  
That pair's the finest pair I ever see  
In this 'ere isle of poisoned ho-devee."

The speaker spoke more loudly than he meant  
(Enough of drink will make a whisper shout,  
As too much makes a shout of bold intent  
Huskily whisper) ; those he pointed out  
Thus heard quite well the sudden compliment.  
She drew herself up with a pretty pout,  
Arching her neck with grace superbly free ;  
While his strong eyes laughed with a world of  
glee.

" Your soldier is a judge ; he knows a man,  
And eke a woman, tho' he loves his beer ;  
I've fought a little in my time, and can  
Be proud to bend thus an old ramrod, dear :  
Old ladies, too, with awesome sharpness scan :  
And even as I leapt upon the pier,  
A jolly dame with marvellous cap snow-white  
Burst out *Quel homme !* in very frank delight.



“ Learn what a peerless prize you come to gain,  
Know what a god is prostrate at your feet ! ”

“ You big bad boy, come back to me as vain  
As ever ! If some giant would but beat  
The boasting out of you !—I’ll shear this mane  
Flung haughtily to every wind we meet,  
All the thick lionlocks of tawny hair  
Wherein your turbulent strength may have its  
lair ! ”

“ And who, of all men in the whole world wide,  
Crowned with the consecration of *your* kiss,  
Would not exult and overflow with pride  
Unmeasured as the ocean of his bliss?  
What dullest Apis ever deified?  
What Bottom in rare metamorphosis,  
Titania’s flower-sweet hands like soft white doves  
Hovering round Donkey-head with delicate  
loves?

“ Yes, I am vain, all-happy and all-vain ;  
As peacock when full noon lights up the eyes  
Emerald and amethyst that star his train,  
Dazzling the sober splendour of the skies ;  
As whidah-bird in his new love’s first gain,  
When he would front an eagle for the prize,  
And all his rapturous vanity unrepent  
Leaps like a fountain in the monstrous crest.

“If I can bring my Love great store of wealth,  
Good—tho’ all gold is dross beside my Love ;  
If I can bring her beauty, vigour, health,  
Good—tho’ her worth is all world’s grace above :  
And shall I bring her these good things by stealth,  
As if ashamed my worship thus to prove ?

Not so ; my life’s best incense shall aspire  
Upon the hilltop in a flaming fire.”

They sat them down where they could look abroad  
Through the sweet gloaming o’er the dim sea-  
space ;

And long they sat in silence hushed and awed,  
The while she nestled close in his embrace.

Surely they felt the very breath of God  
Leaning down softly from the Heavenly place,  
Even as a mother leans with yearnings deep  
To watch her infant sink in happy sleep.

At length she whispers in soft little gasps  
Of slender tremulous shadowy distant sound ;  
Fearing to break the silence that enclasps  
With infinite love and peace the world around ;  
Yet fearing more the silence, through which grasps  
Too powerfully her soul all tranced and bound  
His conquering soul imperious : and her will  
Spends its last free pulsation in the thrill.

(All silently the lily's globe of dew  
Is drunk up by the great sun's hot desire ;  
The burning cloudlet in the burning blue  
Is still as death, and overfraught with fire  
Dissolveth ever upward through and through  
Successive heavens, and would aspire—expire :  
It has condensed to cold and dark again  
Ere it showers earthward in wide-whispering  
rain.)

“Are we in Heaven ? or are we still on earth ?  
Is this indeed Eternity or Time ? . . .  
Oh, Love, the foretaste of another birth,  
Another life from blossoming to prime,  
That showed our richest foison arid dearth,  
Our tropic summer a dark polar clime,  
Was given me in an ecstasy of fear ;  
How deep our roots cling to the Now and  
Here !

“And this *is* Earth ; and in the glass run by  
The sands that surely then for ages stood,  
As all the stars stood steadfast in the sky—  
The burning ranks, the golden multitude  
Of chariots wherein unweariedly  
The Lords of Time have evermore pursued  
The flying Future through the realms of Space :  
Sands run, and stars renew their solemn chase.

“ And shall we wish to hurry to the End ?  
To sleep—to lose the rush, the stress, the glow,  
The rapture of the chase, because we bend  
At whiles faint bruised and dusty ? Ah, no ! no !  
Let all the seasons in the good fruit blend !  
And yet it was but three short months ago  
I sat as now we sit above the sea  
And this was all the thought that dwelt in me :—

“ The stars came gliding out of the sea  
To gaze on the sleeping City,  
With a tremulous light in their glances bright  
Of wonderful love and pity.

“ The breeze was breathing its olden song  
In a drowsy murmurous chanting ;  
While the noble bay with its moonlight spray,  
Kept time in a slumbrous panting.

“ The City couched in a deep repose,  
All toil, all care suspended ;  
The roar and the strife of its turbid life  
In the calm of Nature blended.

“ ‘ Alas ! ’ I sighed with a weary sigh,  
‘ That all the sin and sorrow,  
Now dreaming there, so calm and fair,  
Must wake afresh to-morrow !

“ ‘ Would that the whole might still rest on,  
Entranced, for ever sleeping ;  
The sea and the sky, and the stars on high,  
And those myriads born for weeping ! ’ ”

“ What pansy’s most imperial purple dye,  
What rapturous flush of redness in the rose,  
What lily’s perfect moon-white purity,  
From that dark rain of weeping gleams or glows !  
For as the sun shines ever in the sky,  
And ever round our earth the free wind blows,  
So evermore the tears of heaven distil  
Beauty and good with sorrow for our ill.

“ But I waste costly hours : for this fair Isle  
Is Ithaca ; and poor Penelope,  
Who has been constant all the dreary while,  
Weaving wan hopes of vain embroidery,  
Clasps her Ulysses, young, withouten guile,  
And fancies to hear his Odyssey.

When he has told what wonders him befell,  
She has a little tale of home to tell.”

“ And she shall be cross-questioned to and fro,  
Backwards and forwards, sideways, up and down,  
Anent the tale of suitors who we know  
Were victims to a starry-bright renown,—

Rash moths that plunged into the burning glow,  
Lovely, but crueler than tempest's frown.—

No outward chances gave that voyage a story ;  
But from within came all the gloom and glory.

“ My soul was like a jewel-amulet,\*  
Pale, troubled, day by day more dim and wan ;  
The fatal shadow of a vast regret,  
The pallor of an awful fear, were on ,  
And in its lustre, that seemed always wet  
As with dull tears of hope for ever gone :  
If fitfully it gleamed again, the light  
Was such as oozes up from graves by night.

“ Life wasting out by saddest slow degrees ;  
Life's heart-blood, love, a thin warm crimson thread,  
Trickling so long that scarce the bitter lees  
Kept the pale corse half-living and half-dead :  
Indian, Arabian, and Egyptian seas  
Gave me this vision of too-dreadful dread,  
Blurring their splendour ; as the storm took shape  
To Gama in the Phantom of the Cape.

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\* Under favour of Göthe, who (having mentioned talismans) sings—

“ Amulette sind dergleichen  
Auf *Papier* geschriebne zeichen.”

—*West-östlicher Diwan*.

The term, however, has been commonly used in the wider sense.

“The City of the Greek, whose uproar jars  
The silence of sad Sphinx and pyramid,  
Affronts the desert’s solitude, and mars  
The solemn mystery of millenniums hid  
In unknown mountains under other stars,  
Scared not the Spectre ; pale and cold amid  
    The rainbow throngs, the hum, the savage cries,  
    It held me with its deep accusing eyes.

“We crept upon the smooth Mid Sea ; the air  
Was feverous with Sirocco ; the red sun  
Burned fiercer for the haze that dimmed his  
    glare ;  
All life drooped sick : yet in that hour begun  
A fiery change for me,—the dull despair,  
The pallor and the stagnant tarnish dun,  
    Fermented with keen flames and flashes bright ;  
    New battle opened with a burst of light.

“The amulet, that had been dim and pale  
As ghostly moon in northern night forlorn,  
Dead-still and shrouded in a wan mist-veil,  
Grew then blood-crimson as that high sun shorn  
Of beams—that red hot cannon-ball ; a wail,  
A long keen passionate terrible cry was borne  
    Rending the lethal dumbness ; pierced, I sprang  
    As if to grasp a foe who dealt the pang.

“Quivering with agony as blind as doom,  
And rage as impotent as nightmare-sleep ;  
Restless as one who even in the tomb  
Finds that malignant Memory will not steep  
Her burning heart in the oblivious gloom ;  
I paced the deck ; I glared athwart the deep,  
As if intense volition could enslave  
Your anchored isle to float across the wave.

“The day burned out sublimely in the West,  
My soul was burning till the night was gone,—  
Until the moon sank withering from heaven’s  
crest  
Before the fiery armies of the dawn,  
Whose van was up with golden spears in rest ;  
And my sea calenture became a lawn—  
An English lawn, that loveliest lakelet green  
Guarding an English home of life serene.

“Ruthlessly brilliant as the crowded eyes  
Of Roman ladies glittering down intent  
On some barbarian’s mortal agonies,  
The stars thick-gathered in the firmament—  
That amphitheatre of solemn skies  
Round earth’s arena dark with hot blood spent  
In so much barren and ignoble strife—  
Had gazed upon the Passion of my Life.



“The beautiful alien stars were pitiless  
As bland white statues of the gods could be  
To suppliants leaguered with the direst stress  
Of earthquake, fire, or flood, or storm-swelled sea ;  
Gods unperturbed in their high happiness :  
But the pure infant Dawn compassioned me ;  
    The day-spring bathed my fever in its balm,  
    Divinely sweet and cool, divinely calm.

“And even as I felt its first sweet rest,  
And knew myself once more alive and sane,  
And yearned toward peaceful English homesteads  
    blest  
In looking out upon the waveless main ;  
Even in that instant from the far north-west,  
Where like a pearl-grey cloudlet with no stain  
    Malta grew visible, a swelling psalm  
    Floated you on its rapture through the calm.

“Clad all in white, you Angel ; crystal-bare  
The feet that did not touch the sapphire sea ;  
Your head clothed only with its own rich hair,  
Flowing dishevelled even to the knee ;  
God's dove athwart the deluge of despair  
Bringing the blessing of the olive-tree :  
    For you were radiant, and your brow's moon-  
    splendour  
    Shed on your glowing cheeks a veil most tender.

“ You rested floating upright, when so near  
That my stretched arm had almost reached the  
place ;

Your vision swept the lonely hemisphere  
As if with triumph in the ample space,  
Then fixed on me, so that I felt you hear  
My mute emotion ; then, with glorious grace  
Leaning, you whispered : ‘ *It is well, well, well !* ’  
And vanished as my bosom’s first breath fell.

“ And from that moment it was well indeed  
With me, and well grows better evermore ;  
Well on the white waves whitened by our speed,  
Well in the gloaming on this lovely shore ;  
And ever well it must be now decreed,  
Whatever yet the Future holds in store ;  
Our love is fixed ; therefore erect, elate,  
With awe, but with no fear, we welcome Fate.”

When thus his tale was done, to him she told  
What she had told her Mother on the morrow  
Of that same night, whose wonders manifold  
Transfigured two sick lives of fear and sorrow  
Into twin raptures, rich with all the gold  
That Earth could ever from Heaven’s pathways  
borrow ;

The nights were one, the solemn dawns were one,  
Both triumphs mounted with the selfsame sun.

All she had told before she told to him,  
And more that could be told to him alone ;  
And while the moon ventured its faery rim,  
Then floated up the vague, he drank the tone  
Of her low voice and marked her pure eyes swim  
As on the vast vague sea of the Unknown,  
Which floods and ebbs with infinite longing awe ;  
And kissed them back to earth's most tender law.

"Some night," she whispered, "when the moon  
shall be  
As then a little later than to-night,  
And self-withdrawn as then the quiet sea  
Has left the sands to glitter in clear light ;  
And all the rock-strown shore around is free  
From human presence and all else that might  
The dread charm break, the secret spirit scare,  
We two alone, my dearest, will go there.

"And we may hear a music, full of power  
As the great sea with all its waves in storm,  
Yet lovely as the purest lily-flower,  
And mystic as the moonlight soft and warm ;  
And when the singing has entranced the hour  
We may discover an immortal form,—  
Glaucus, our sea-god reverend and benign,  
Among the rocks that seem his ruined shrine

“And we will kneel as one before him there ;  
And you shall utter all the gratitude  
And reverence of both our hearts, which were  
Too great for me to utter. If he should  
But lay his hands with the old tender care  
Upon our heads and bless us,—Oh that would  
Make holier to us evermore the place  
With antique pieties and natural grace !”

“Heathen of heathens ! I am all unmanned ;  
Wicked as is your will, it must be done.  
Good hap for me that this old sea-god bland,  
And not the radiant Monarch of the Sun,  
Met you and charmed you : think ! I come to land,  
And ask for Helen ; they my asking shun ;  
What strange sad sunflower haunts the garden’s  
mouth ?  
A modern Clytie yearning toward the South !”

These lovers have arisen, and have left,  
Together gone into the night away ;  
And I seem standing on the shore, bereft,  
Watching the weaving of the waves and spray,  
But cannot weave into my halfspun web  
Another flower, or golden from the day  
Or purple from the night ; for, day and night,  
In that moondusk they have vanished quite.

The lots are huddled in the fatal urn ;  
The fairest souls may draw the darkest doom,  
And so long years their innate splendour burn  
Struggling disastrously with stormy gloom :  
Yet some fair souls find Fate and Chance not stern,  
Their light has but to shine and not consume ;  
    God's vestals feeding the eternal flame  
    In beautiful temples hallowed by His name.

The doom of these whom I have ever lost  
I know not—whether calm as temple air,  
Or wild as mountain-beacon tempest-tost ;  
Nor need we search it with an anxious care . . .  
But one thread more the dusky loom has crossed,  
Some lines in her own writing firm and fair ;  
    No date, no place ; these pretty words above  
    “ Two petals of our Fadeless Rose of Love.”—

## I.

“ I went of late amid the dancing throng,  
    To dance with *Him*—my Love who loveth me ;  
His whisper caught me up, ‘ How long, how long,  
    Have I been seeking, desolate, for thee !  
And now—Oh well a man might seek and trace  
    For twenty lives, in hope at last to see  
The perfect vision of this fairest face  
    Of all fair faces in the world that be !

## II.

“ ‘Such joy as our dark world has when the moon  
Comes floating sole and regnant in her skies ;  
Such joy to me, such glorifying boon,  
When one sole Presence floateth in my eyes.  
More beautiful to-night than ever, Sweet,  
And yet most beautiful at every time :  
How do you make perfection more complete ?  
How leave like infancy the queenliest prime ?

## III.

“ ‘Upon my hopeless night your dawn arose ;  
I said, The World can never be more bright :  
Yet ever, more and more, the splendour grows,  
And leaves that dawn confused with ancient night.  
I cry, This moment must be full-crowned noon !  
The moment brings new bursts of life and light !  
No more ! no more ! my heart and spirit swoon  
In thine infinity of heavenly might !

## IV.

“ ‘A dawn ?—Your brow itself is what a dawn !  
Emerging from that Indian dusk of hair,  
With all its poor pale pearl-stars backwithdrawn,  
The archèd Promise shines so proudly fair.

I find you out at last : you stir one tress,  
 You let some young smile dream, you change a  
     flower ;  
 And straight you are transformed ! O Sorceress  
 And Queen of Spells, I tremble at your power !'

## v.

"I went last night amid the dancing throng,  
 To dance with *Him*—my Love who loveth me :  
 He sprang a-flush, 'How long, how long, how long !  
     The twenty lives I waited here for thee !'  
 My dark-brown hair, the string of pearls, I wore,  
 As when his praises flowed so royally :  
 'I bring the self-same spell that charmed before ;  
     To prove, indeed, your own inconstancy !'

## vi.

"We stood together in the far recess :  
 His noble eyes dilated full and bright,  
 With love triumphant throbbing happiness ;  
 He bent down o'er me from his stately height—  
 'How can our Queen, whose spirit sways the sun,  
     Deign to enchant so mean a youth as this ?  
 Of all her countless spells the weakest one  
     Would trance him evermore in perfect bliss.

## VII.

“ ‘ Dear twilight mystery of hair, that now  
Art starred with pearls, I bid all night farewell ;  
Pure archèd Promise of the dawn-bright brow,  
The full noon neareth, grand as you foretell ! ’  
He placed a kiss upon my brow and hair,  
His kiss of Love enthroned and glorified ;  
I felt it burning like a ruby there,  
The pallid pearl-gleams in its fulgence died :

## VIII.

“ I felt it flushing all my neck and face,  
What time we danced among the dancers free ;  
To all the youths and maidens in the place  
It signalled proudly of my Love and me :  
It lights and warms me in my chamber now,  
It lights the world, the years, all things that be ;  
A royal jewel sacred to my brow,  
A Splendour lamping all Eternity.”

JERSEY, *Xmas* 1861.

LONDON, *July* 1864.



## S H E L L E Y

UPON a grassy slope of shore I lay

Hour after hour, from sunset into night,  
Outgazing tranquil o'er the tranquil bay,  
And dreaming in a mood of rare delight.

Yes, for some hours, sky-pure sea-calm star-bright  
My spirit was in tune with heaven and earth,  
Nor felt the discords of its mortal birth.

The round moon floated half-way up the sky,  
Beneath an arch of clouds serenely fair

As if upfurled where never breeze could fly :

So that it seemed a lamp suspended there  
To light the sea-floored theatre of air ;

Whose curtain raised, whose hush of expectation  
Foretold a solemn drama's celebration.

My dream grew deeper, deeper evermore ;

A sleepless dream, a seeing trance, no swoon.

I floated with the throb of sea and shore,

And felt the earth swift-wheeling with the moon,  
And saw the worlds as they indeed are,—strewn

Above, below, as fish through ocean roam,  
Not gliding round an even-surfaced dome.

Until the Drama which that hush foretold  
Did come indeed as at a monarch's call ;  
Although its pregnant scenes were not unrolled  
Upon that sea-stage, nor within that wall  
Of circling crystal, nor were lamped at all  
By that serenest moon,—they claimed a stage  
Of ampler scope and grander equipage.

The stars are speeding in their companies ;  
God's chariots in divine array, they roll  
Circling the sphere of three infinities,  
Our symbol of His thought-confounding Whole,  
As Plato saw them with his clear-eyed soul : \*  
He saw, we see ; and each one tries to tell  
The Vision each one knows ineffable.

And every silver-burning chariot-sphere  
Whose wheels churn Æther to the foam of Light  
Is guided by its scraph-charioteer,  
Serenely regnant o'er its fulgent flight,  
Sceptred and crowned and clothed with awful  
might :

The infinite armies of the Lord, whose pinions  
Flash fire throughout His infinite dominions.

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\* See the *Phædrus*.

And yet, as every dreamer seems to be  
The centre of the action of his dream,  
Our speck of this poor earth-sphere was to me  
The single central fountain whence did stream  
The growing river of that drama's theme ;  
Which rolled so far and broadened out so wide  
That all the worlds were floated on its tide.

A voice fell past me like a plummet cast  
To fathom that unfathomable sea,  
A voice austere sad,—“ At last, at last  
The measure of the earth's iniquity  
Brims God's great urn ; at last it all must be  
Poured out upon the earth in blood and tears  
And raging fire, for years and years and years.

“ The Churches are polluted,—let them fall  
And crush old errors underneath their weight ;  
The royal purples are a bloody pall  
To stifle Freedom,—rend them ere too late ;  
The laws are silken meshes for the great  
But iron nets to hold the poor and mean,—  
Let them too perish. . . . But what next is seen ?

“ Because the priests were false, the shrines impure,  
Mankind in God Himself all faith have lost ;  
Because blood dyed old purples, they endure  
To walk all naked in the sun and frost ;  
Because old laws the law of justice crost,

They would live henceforth without any law :  
No loyal service, no revering awe !

“Who will go down amidst these desolations  
Of fire and blood and lunacies and woe,  
To chant aloud to all the wildered nations  
Those heavenly truths no earth can overthrow,  
The changeless truths Eternal ? Who will go  
To preach the Gospel of our Lord above,  
Chanting perpetually the law of Love ?”

Throughout the whole sphere-throbbing vastitude  
Deep silence followed when that great voice  
ended ;  
Even the music of the multitude  
Of all their rhythmic revolutions blended,  
The ever-rolling music, seemed suspended :  
And I then dared to lift my awe-shut eyes  
And search for him who spoke throughout the  
skies.

Search for the moon of night, the sun of day !—  
In centre of the universal round  
A broad and steadfast disc of splendour lay ;  
Fit field for him who stood upon its ground,  
The solemn angel with pure glory crowned,—  
His right hand raised, his countenance divine  
Intently listening through the hyaline.

From far, far, far, far even in that vast,  
A voice came trembling ravishingly sweet—  
“O Raphael beloved of God! the last  
And meanest of the spirits who repeat  
Eternal praises round the Judgment-Seat  
Implores that he, if none of greater worth,  
May sing the self-same praises on that earth.”

A pure joy lighted up great Raphael's face  
As then he gestured “Hither!”; and there came  
A star-like speck from out the bounds of space  
With swift and swerveless flight to reach its aim,  
Developing into a tongue of flame,  
Until it stood upon that field of light  
A fervent Seraph beautiful and bright.

Most beautiful in the eternal youth  
Of those who ever breathe the heavenly air  
Of perfect holiness and love and truth;  
Most bright in full-flusht fervour, standing there  
With half-spread wings and backward-streaming  
hair,  
As if alit for but a moment's rest  
While speeding forward on his single quest.

Then Raphael laid a benedictive hand  
On that pure brow, and spake in gentle tone—  
“Thou dear, dear Child of God, than whom doth stand

No purer humbler spirit near His throne,  
And none more ardent to speed forth alone  
On any errand from the bliss above  
In single-hearted and unbounded love ;

“Thy service is accepted : thou shalt pall  
In mortal flesh thy seraphood sublime ;  
A witness of the one true Lord of all  
Amidst a world gone mad with sin and crime,  
A prophet of the glorious Future time,  
And of Eternity when Time is past  
Amidst the Present of a world aghast.

“I see the storm’s commencing clouds of gloom,  
I see the storm’s first lightnings fiercely flash,  
I hear the storm’s first thunders roll and boom,  
I hear the storm’s first ruins quake and crash,—  
O Man, thy judgment-wrath is wild and rash! . . .  
Go down, dear Child ; and may God give thee power  
To serve Him loyally thro’ this stern hour.”

Then most elastic Time, as oft in dream,  
Stretched out until five lustrums came and went,  
Swaying my soul upon their stormy stream,  
The earth was shaken, the great deeps were rent ;  
From all the quarters of the firmament  
A desolating deluge seemed to pour  
Of fire and blood and tears and frantic war.

Amidst whose terrors one stern human form,  
Above the mad crowds throned in haughty state,  
Appeared to wield the thunders of the storm  
And hurl its dreadful lightnings, and dilate—  
The Captain-Executioner of Fate ;  
Until dragged down, and with a galling chain  
Bound to a lonely rock amidst the main.

And then another lustrum came and went,  
Of peaceful years compared with those before ;  
Wherein I heard that Voice whose ravishment  
I had not heard amid the crash and roar  
And shriekings of the earth-confusing war.  
Through all the lustrum till the chained Chief died  
That glorious Voice the air beatified.

A voice of right amidst a world's foul wrong,  
A voice of hope amidst a world's despair,  
A voice instinct with such melodious song  
As hardly until then had thrilled the air  
Of this gross underworld wherein we fare :  
With heavenly inspirations, too divine  
For souls besotted with earth's sensual wine.

All powers and virtues that ennoble men—  
The hero's courage and the martyr's truth,  
The saint's white purity, the prophet's ken,  
The high unworldliness of ardent youth,  
The poet's rapture, the apostle's ruth,

Informed the Song; whose theme all themes  
above  
Was still the sole supremacy of Love.

The peals of thunder echoing through the sky,  
The moaning and the surging roar of seas,  
The rushing of the storm's stern harmony,  
The subtlest whispers of the summer breeze,  
The notes of singing birds, the hum of bees,  
All sounds of nature, sweet and wild and strong  
Commingle in the flowing of the song ;

Which flowing mirrored all the Universe,—  
With sunsets flushing down the golden lines,  
And mountains towering in the lofty verse,  
And landscapes with their olives and their  
vines  
Spread out beneath a sun which ever shines,  
With moonlit seas and pure star-spangled skies,  
The World a Poem, and Earth Paradise.

But ever and anon in its swift sweetness  
The voice was heard to lisp and hesitate,  
Or quiver absently from its completeness,  
As one in foreign realms who must translate  
Old thoughts into new language—Ah, how great  
The difference between our rugged tongue  
And that in which its hymns before were sung !



A glorious voice of glorious inspiration ;  
A voice of rapid rapture so intense  
That in its musical intoxication  
The Truth arrayed with such an affluence  
Of Beauty half-escaped the ravished sense,—  
A sun scarce visible in its own shine,  
A god forgotten in his gorgeous shrine.

A voice divinely sweet, a voice no less  
Divinely sad ; for all the maddening jar  
Of all the wide world's sin and wretchedness  
Swelled round its music, as when round a star  
Black storm-clouds gather and its white light mar :  
Pure music is pure bliss in heaven alone ;  
Earth's air transmutes it to melodious moan.

The lustrum passed. The vultures of despair  
And fierce ambition ceased not to consume  
The heart of him rock-bound, who failed to bear  
With Titan-patience his Promethean doom—  
Lacking the Titan's conscience. When the tomb  
Had held him but a little while in peace,  
I heard the singing voice for ever cease.

And then once more the Vision filled my soul  
Of universal Æther, and the spheres  
Whose marshalled myriads through its silence roll  
With life and light and music ; while the years,  
Heavy with anguish, blind with blood and tears,

Pant after them, exhausted one by one  
Till the last heir of Time shall sink foredone.

Upon his central field of burning gold  
Great Raphael stood ; and there with meek head  
bowed  
And drooping wings and suppliant hands, behold,  
The Seraph knelt, whom still the sullen cloud  
Of mortal life enveloped like a shroud,  
Through which his native glorious beauty shown  
Star-sad, star-pure, star-tremulous, star-wan.

And Raphael said "How faint and sad and pale  
You now return to us, Belovèd One,  
From that far Earth of stormy guilt and bale  
Wherein thy errand now is wholly done !  
Hath ever God deserted a dear Son ?"  
While bending down, his princely hand carest  
The saintly brow so pallid and deprest.

What voice of quivering anguish made reply !—  
"I am unworthy of thy ruthless love,  
Thou pure Archangel ! Never more may I  
Rejoin in bliss the stainless quires above,  
Who singing in their circles ever move  
Around the footstool of the Throne of Grace ;  
Ah, never, nevermore behold His face !

“I dared—weak worm unconscious of my weakness!—

To claim a service to our Lord and King ;  
And I have failed;—in hope and faith and meekness,  
In wisdom, knowledge, patient suffering,  
In prudence, calmness, power, in everything !  
The awful eyes of all Thy stars, O Lord,  
Transfix me with rebukes, each glance a sword !

“Breathing for ever Heaven’s inviolate calm,  
I knew not how on Earth the wild winds blow ;  
Singing for ever Heaven’s ecstatic psalm,  
I knew not how on earth the wails of woe  
And shrieks of rage to maddening discord grow ;  
Circling for ever in the Sun’s full light,  
I knew not Earth’s black clouds and sphereless night.

“I could not understand men ; all their hearts  
Had secrets which I could not even guess.  
Their greed for dross upon the daily marts,  
Their pride and fawning in the palaces,  
Their solemn church-attending worldliness,  
Their servile fear of Custom’s lawless law,  
Filled me with sad perplexity and awe.

“Their gods seemed hideous monsters only great  
In power and malice, or such phantoms vain  
As self-bewildered thought might evocate

To mock the yearning heart and weary brain.

I strove to teach them the true God, Whose  
reign

Is infinite love for all things that exist ;

And I was branded as an Atheist.

“I pitied both the tyrant and the slave ;

The one so cursed with pride and heartless mood,

The other from the cradle to the grave

With soul and body famishing for food.

I charged them by their common brotherhood

To fling their mutual bonds off and be free :

They paused in their old strife to spurn at me.

“I who was sent to charm their souls to love,

Could only vex them to worse hate and scorn ;

And yet I swear, O Raphael, that I strove

With all my power to mend their state forlorn :

By every pang *they* felt *my* heart was torn,\*

And wounded worse by their unkindly spurning :

I loved them with a love of infinite yearning.

“Lo, I have failed : but God, *He* cannot fail.

He speeds a shaft against Hell’s Dragon-King,

And it falls shivered from the iron mail ;—

---

\* “Me, who am as a nerve o’er which do creep  
The else-unfelt oppressions of the earth.”

“*Julian and Maddalo.*”

There let it rot, the weak and worthless thing !  
I dare to triumph in my perishing :  
His quiver lacks not many a nobler dart  
Equal to pierce the Monster to the heart ! ”

But Raphael raised the Seraph from his kneeling,  
And prest him heart to heart in long embrace ;  
Then stood erect, to all the heights revealing  
The fulgent beauty of his solemn face ;  
And flung abroad his voice to swell through space  
And thrill on all the ever-rolling spheres  
Triumphant music for celestial ears.

“ I call to witness all the angel-quires  
Sphering the heavens with their eternal hymn,  
I call to witness all the orbèd fires  
Bearing the light of life through Æther dim ;  
The saints, the Cherubim, the Seraphim,  
All armies of the Servants of our Lord,  
I call to witness to my just award.

“ Thou hast *not* failed ; where holy love and truth  
Contend with Evil failure cannot be :  
Their sorest scars claim reverence not ruth,  
Their worst repulse is still a victory.  
Thou, well-belovèd, who didst bend the knee  
In pure self-sacrifice to meet God’s frown,  
Kneeling wert circled with the martyr’s crown.

" Music is sweet, whatever madmen's ears  
Be startled and tormented by the strain ;  
Sunshine is glorious, whatever spheres  
Cloud themselves from it in dark storm and rain :  
Your spirit is as pure from worldly stain  
As is a moonbeam on a shore of slime ;  
You sank not your Eternity in Time.

" O wretched Earth ! God sends thee age by age,  
In pity of thy wild perpetual moan,  
The saint, the bard, the hero, and the sage :  
But still the lofty life is led alone,  
The singer sings as in a tongue unknown,  
The sage's wisdom lamps his single urn ;  
Thou wilt not heed or imitate or learn.

" The blood of prophets thou hast loved to shed  
Still keepeth green thy fields, whose costly soil  
Is of the dust of nameless heroes dead ; \*  
The only music in the vast turmoil  
Of all thy complicated strife and toil  
Was breathed from poets whom you starved with  
scorn : †  
O ever-unregenerate world forlorn ! "

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\* Carlyle.

† " Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world."  
—*Shelley*, " Defence of Poetry."

Lo, while the great Archangel's voice rang on,  
The spirit by that tearful earth-cloud shaded  
In ever clear and clearer beauty shone  
To full transfiguration ; for it faded  
As mists of night whose meshes are unbraided  
By the swift beams of morning, so that they  
Evanish wholly in the perfect day.

And there, amidst the wheeling constellations,  
Upon the central disc of burning gold  
That throbbed harmonious with their palpitations,  
He stood with Raphael glorious to behold. . . .  
Then all the Vision from my brain was rolled ;  
For that broad disc of palpitating fire,  
Consuming far through heaven the dead night's pyre,

And bridging the deep bay with golden splendour,  
Was our own Sun. . . . The sky was clear and calm,  
The morning air most fragrant, fresh and tender,  
The green earth glittered with its dewy balm,  
The flashing waters sang a joyous psalm :  
All was as beautiful and pure that morn  
As if a sinless world had just been born.

# THE DEAD YEAR

## I.

AT midnight, in the heart of that great wood,  
Whose trunks towered dark and spectral, crowned  
    with snow,  
Alone amidst the chill north wind I stood ;  
And saw, whenas some fiercer gust would blow,  
White fragments plunge upon the white below ;  
    And from the rigid branches heard the blast  
    Wring long wild clamours as its fury passed.

## II.

There saw I, at that time, the weak old Year  
Descend in silence from his chariot-throne ;  
A weary wight, whose rest-joy dreamed some fear.  
But in the face of Him who climbed thereon  
Youth's vigorous hope and self-assurance shone ;  
    Though stern and clouded with the gloomy  
    thought—  
Must this beginning with that end be fraught ?



## III.

The thronèd King went proudly on his path :  
The other turned, and with mysterious sighs  
Fled onward with the tempest's gathering wrath.  
Beneath the scornful brilliance of the skies,  
Crowded with stars like cold un pitying eyes,  
My soul pursued the thin grey quivering form  
That like a cloud was hurried down the storm.

## IV.

'Thwart homeless mountains, dead and shrouded  
plains,  
'Thwart roaring woods and billowy wastes of moor,  
'Thwart the Mid-sea and Afric's wild domains  
Of desert-fire and haunted realm obscure,  
His flight as swerveless as a new colure  
Swept down the savage ocean to its goal—  
The icy heart of death, the Southern Pole.

## V.

The broad cold joyless glare thrust into sight  
A ghastly nakedness of ice, which lay  
In livid bulks with grinning points of light ;  
Sublime though terrible. But from the day  
Winding a strange and labyrinthic way  
Through hollows and ravines of frozen gloom,  
The realmless shadow sought and found his tomb,

## VI.

And, still advancing, cried in feeble tone,  
I come to join my buried Sires in death.  
Whereto I heard a congregated moan,  
A quavering sigh and moan of feeble breath,  
Respond, "Is yet another born for death?"

He cried, A Youth now sways the pauseless car.  
They moaned, "Alas! the End, how far—how  
far?"

## VII.

I saw the secret Spectre-peopled tomb;—  
A mighty Cavern vaulted like a sky,  
Filled with a dreary mitigated gloom;  
For out of its dark-frowning canopy,  
And out of all its vague immensity,  
Cold sparkles glittering keen as naked blades  
Wrought constant twilight of inconstant shades.

## VIII.

And while yet died away the piteous moans,  
The moaning multitude therein I found:  
Dim regal shadows, throned on icy thrones  
Ranged pace by pace about the vast wall-round,  
And stretching still beyond the utmost bound  
To which the disinterring light could pierce,  
They sat—the Phantoms of the Buried Years.

## IX.

Their crowned brows were hoar and shrunk with  
age,  
Their sceptred hands with nerveless tremors shook,  
Their lightless eyes seemed spell-bound to the page  
Spread open of a knee-supported book,  
So overcharged with writings that my look  
Brought nothing to my mind except a waste  
Of blots and reckless scratches interlaced.

## X.

And every robe was foul, and fiercely rent,  
And stiff and dark with heavy clots of gore ;  
And every crown and sceptre cloven and shent.  
They all with finished age were weak and hoar,  
Yet in their ages there was less and more ;  
By slight degrees ascending to an Eld  
Whose contemplation mind and spirit quell'd.

## XI.

From off his soul-confusing Chronicle  
Each drew at length reluctant eyes away,  
And quavered to the Shadow standing still,  
“ You come but now from that fair realm of day ;  
We long have pined, to this dark tomb a prey :  
Ere yet thou take thy throne of silent pain  
Inform us, we desire thee, of thy reign.

## XII.

“How tends the bitter fate-deciding war,  
Constant between the Evil and the Good?  
Mankind—have they grown better than of yore,  
Less steeped and brutalised in lust and blood,  
Less fatally inconsequent of mood,  
More valiant, faithful, loving, and sincere?  
Is any hope that now the End draws near?”

## XIII.

He said, Could you but see me, O my Sires,  
Your eyes had read ere this what you would hear;  
For I am stained with blood and scarred with fires,  
And rent and wounded and amazed with fear.  
And they responded with their plainings drear,  
“Ah! blood and fire for ever, as of old!  
Yet let thy voice thy story now unfold.”

## XIV.

He sighed, Ev'n as of old; nor is there hope  
That yet it nearth to the final doom:  
For broad and deep as ever yawns the scope—  
An almost unattempted gulf of gloom  
Thronged thick with monsters savage to consume,  
Taloned and scaled with force and dread for  
strife—  
Between what is and that which should be Life.

## XV.

The old deep-founded Temples far renowned,  
The vast and lofty Temples quake and split :  
A column here reels prostrate to the ground ;  
A roof-tree there sinks crumbling after it,  
Leaving free vision of the Infinite ;  
    Some sudden storm lays flat blank breadths of wall :  
    Entire destruction seems to threaten all.

## XVI.

Their rich adornment of all gems and gold,  
Their marbles pure and massy stones displaced,  
Their forms of lofty sculpture manifold,  
Are left exposed to incoherent waste ;  
The splendour soiled, the lineaments defaced :  
    No Architect appeareth, to assign  
    Them saving service in a nobler Shrine.

## XVII.

The worshippers abandon them in fear,  
And with them God and God's restraining law ;  
Or, used so long to love and to revere,  
Tread down new reason underneath old awe,  
And cling with eyes shut blind to every flaw.  
    More loud, more proud, the priests declaim their  
        parts,  
    To drown the murmurs swelling in their hearts.

## XVIII.

Exiled from God and His paternal love,  
Far—far from home, men languish desolate ;  
A dungeon-roof, instead of Heaven, above ;  
And constant vision through the iron grate  
Of one stern Jailor, blind and stony Fate—  
    The stony heart unthrilled by wail or prayer,  
    The stony eyes that blench at no despair.

## XIX.

The noblest given over to his hand  
Have no trust left, but to confront his pride  
With such endurance, wisdom, self-command,  
That they become his peers—are petrified  
Against his shafts—erect, though unallied :  
    Their sole religion and their comfort sole,  
    To love and help their fellows in this dole.

## XX.

There ceased he for a while ; and all the throng  
Of trembling phantoms, till my heart was sore  
With their so pitcous moaning, moaned “How  
    long ?  
So was it in the long, long days of yore ;  
Must it be so for ever, evermore ?  
    How long, dread Lord, thus weary and opprest,  
    Must we await the End of perfect rest ? ”

## XXI.

They moaned : but One arose, of solemn mien  
And lofty stature, on whose features grand  
Wisdom and love and sorrow dwelt serene ;  
And swayed a Cross for sceptre in his hand ;  
And spoke in tranquil accents of command,  
    “The mighty tree’s slow life doth tower and spread,  
    Although the branch whence this was formed be  
    dead.”

## XXII.

And then Another, on whose turban-crown  
A Crescent keenly flamed with blood-red light,  
Arose, and flung the gorgeous jewel down,  
And cried, “That infant Splendour shone out bright  
Between the clouds one dark and stormy night.  
    All things of earth succumb to Time and Fate :  
    The moons are fuller now ; the month grows late.”

## XXIII.

When all was still the throneless Shade went on :  
Blood has been shed, my robe is foul with gore :  
Amidst the heights of sacred Lebanon,  
In China, in Morocco, on the shore  
From Capua to Palermo, war—war—war :  
    And these are but a wound’s first drops of blood,  
    Ere yet the veins bring up their gushing flood.

## XXIV.

The war of classes, which has raged so long,  
Still groweth more intense, till it attain  
The crisis fatal to the deadlier wrong.  
Imperial liars, thronèd Kings insane,  
Statesmen and placemen selfish, blind and vain,  
The Peoples' inward rottenness avow ;  
And Europe's Cæsars are her Aztecs now.

## XXV.

Around her churches of the cross and spire,  
Around her palaces so rich and haught,  
Around her castles of volcanic fire,  
Around her polities so subtly wrought,  
Rages a wild waste flood of restless thought.  
Sapping the old foundations : those must be  
Full firmly fixed that long defy the sea.

## XXVI.

Long gathering foulness stifled all the air :  
The storm began in France ; then, desolating,  
Swept Europe with its lightnings everywhere ;  
Through fierce destructions ever re-creating.  
One woe is past, another woe is waiting :  
The air is still with sullen foulness rife,  
And men still breathe, not life, but death-in-life.



## XXVII.

The mass of traders full of lies and fraud,  
The mass of rulers cowardly and blind,  
The mass of people without faith or God,  
The mass of teachers barren as the wind,  
The mass of laws unsuited to mankind :  
    What doom do these imperiously require,  
    But blood and death, and ordeal as by fire ?

## XXVIII.

He paused again ; and straightway all the throng  
Of spectral Struldbrugs \* thrilled the icy gloom,  
Moaning in chorus drear, " How long, how long,  
How long are we within our living tomb  
Condemned to hateful consciousness of Doom ?  
    When will the ocean of eternity  
    Engulf us, quenching all our misery ? "

## XXIX.

But one vast Shade (by whom a couchant form,  
Monstrous, loomed dim) rose, threatful, far away,  
And cried, " This pigmy Man—this evil swarm  
Of restless, lawless, greedy imps, that prey  
On Earth our Mother—shall he last for aye ?  
    *He* dream to last, who gathereth bone by bone  
    All that is left now of the Mastodon ? "

---

\* See Swift's " Gulliver's Travels. "

## XXX.

Then all exclaimed, "Thou, youngest in this hell ;  
Much of the tale thou tellest, each one here  
Of many thousands had before to tell :  
One thread of crimson wrath or sombre fear  
In Fate's wide loom still runs through many a year.  
Hast thou no star in night, no gleam of good  
To mark thee out amidst our brotherhood ?"

## XXXI.

O venerable Fathers, he replied :  
If summer boasteth of her full-blown flowers,  
They yet were fostered to their perfect pride,  
Through germ and bud, by many previous hours  
Of wintry snows, of vernal suns and showers.  
I wear, indeed, upon my brow one star,  
By which I may be singled out afar.

## XXXII.

A nation long was trodden in the dust  
'Neath various and discordant tyrannies,  
Until it seemed embruted to the lust  
Of its base despots,—mortgaging for these  
The priceless fame of olden centuries ;  
And, like the wretchedness of Circe's swine,  
Drugging its all-sick soul with sensual wine.

## XXXIII.

This nation is aroused from shore to shore ;  
The drunken lethargy is past away,  
The drunken frenzies vex its brain no more.  
The night is gone ; the sullen lingering grey  
Consumes in fires of the advancing day,  
Whose crimson dawn shall have an azure noon  
This people rise, to labour for its boon.

## XXXIV.

The dreamer graspeth firmly Action's sword ;  
The coward plunges smiling down the grave,  
To drag down with him tyranny abhorred ;  
The meanest miser and self-seeking knave  
Give all up for their country ; the poor slave  
Of superstition dares to see the truth ;  
The long-oppressed is full of gentle ruth.

## XXXV.

The Niobe \* of nations, petrified,  
With all her children prostrate at her feet,  
Each with a barbed arrow in its side,

---

\* Byron, in "Childe Harold."

Hath started into sudden life to greet  
With yearning love and wonder rapture-sweet  
Her darlings waking from their trance of death ;  
Though two lie still, ev'n they breathe prescient  
breath.

## XXXVI.

Whence hath been poured this great electric thrill,  
Of God-like power to quicken very stone  
With life and soul, with hope and strength and  
will ?—

Throughout that air, long filled with hopeless moan,  
A living Voice was heard supreme and lone,  
Calm as the heavens and mighty as the sea,  
*Arise ! arise, Italia ! one and free !*

## XXXVII.

A Shade \* stood up with interruption keen—  
A woe-worn countenance, sad earnest eyes,  
Brow-crowned with bitter bays, exalted mien—  
“ O slow-come triumph of my prophecies !  
For this I never ceased to agonise,  
In banishment, in pain, in want—or fed  
As menials are with strangers' bitter bread.”

---

\* Dante. See the “ Divine Comedy ” throughout.

## XXXVIII.

Another Shadow \*—surely not of man,  
But Seraph beautiful—above whose throne,  
For motto, these two words "Cor Cordium" ran  
In letters throbbing fire, stood next alone;  
And chanted in a clear and solemn tone,  
"Since now hope, truth, and justice, *do* avail,  
O Naples and Italia, hail, all hail!"

## XXXIX.

The youngest looked up proud to that dim dome:  
Florence and Milan, Naples, Sicily,  
Are crying out to Venice and to Rome,  
"Ye soon shall rise to join our family,  
And make us one inviolate Italy:  
With fear-stung rage the Austrian frets, past  
bound;  
The Papal thunders are innocuous sound."

## XL.

How has such fruit by such a tree been borne?  
How has this Italy, in sheer despite  
Of foes whose legions laughed her arms to scorn,

---

\* Shelley. See the "Ode to Naples" (1820). Upon his tomb at Rome are inscribed the words "Cor Cordium."

Of friends as false in heart as great in might,  
Of statesmen plotting wrongs to help the right,  
Of Europe selfish, of herself distract,  
Wrought out her grand idea into fact ?

## XLI.

She has two noble sons ; by these she *is*.  
The Thinker ; who, inspired from earliest youth,  
In want and pain, in exile's miseries,  
'Mid alien scorn, 'mid foes that knew not ruth,  
Has ever preached his spirit's inmost truth ;  
Though friends waxed cold or turned their love  
to hate,  
Though even now his country is ingrate.

## XLII.

The Doer, whose high fame as purely shines  
As His,\* who heretofore Sicilia won  
With victories flowing free as Homer's lines.  
Sublime in action when the strife is on,  
Sublime in pity when the strife is done ;  
A pure and lofty spirit, blessed from sight  
Of meaner nature's selfishness, and spite.

---

\* Timoleon's. See Plutarch's Lives ; whence the simile in the following line.

## XLIII.

Therefore, O fathers, my best symbol see,  
Noble in meanness, rent, and stained with gore :  
To future Romans this Red Shirt shall be,  
As was that Leathern Apron \* borne of yore  
To all the glittering pomp of Persian war.  
If any hope despite the Past may be ;  
Italia shall be one, great, glorious, free !

## XLIV.

He finished ; and deep silence followed. Then  
The congregated Shades in doubtful chime  
Maundered all querulous ;—like senile men,  
Who, stranded helpless on the present time,  
See nought before them but a waste of slime  
Left by that ebbing flood of life, which rolled  
So strong and deep in *their* young days of old.

## XLV.

“Egypt, Assyria, Persia, Greece and Rome—  
How many a lofty creed and glorious state !—  
Have flourished under Heaven’s eternal dome,

---

\* The famous Direfsh-e-Gavaneh, or Apron of Gavah the Smith, which Feridoon adopted for the banner of Iran : adorning it with jewels, to which each successive Monarch added until it blazed like a meteor in the front of battle.

With vigour emulous to last *its* date.  
Go, seek them now : they moulder desolate,  
Or languish ignominiously effete ;  
Thus mortal things with Time and Doom compete !

## XLVI.

“ The pure, the wise, the beautiful, the brave,  
The darlings of Earth’s golden youth, are—  
where ?  
Deep-trampled, rotted in the formless grave ;  
Though still, wan ghosts, they haunt the upper  
air.  
Are wiser, purer, braver, breathing there ?  
Plato’s broad brow frowns homilies forlorn ;  
Nay, Helen’s lips smile all your hopes to scorn.

## XLVII.

“ Then vex not us, nor vex thyself, we pray,  
With hopes whose vanity we proved of yore.  
One hope is fixed ; when earth has passed away,  
And sin has perished, *Time shall be no more* ;—  
Oh, that the grand catastrophe were o’er ! \* \* \*  
Behold, awaiteth thee that penal throne,  
Which while thou reignedst there down here hath  
grown,



## XLVIII.

“As by its side another now doth grow  
For him who reigneth now so young and proud.”  
He shuddered to his seat of wordless woe ;  
The palsied heads to their old pages bowed.  
My spirit was withdrawn, amazed and cowed,  
    From those cadaverous servitors of Doom ;  
    Dim, silent, ghastly, in their living tomb.

“O dreadful Lord, O gracious God, I know  
That I and all the other captives here  
Have wrought, each for himself, this doom of  
woe :

Yet Thou, All-merciful, bend down Thine ear !

“Alas, alas ! what have we for a plea ?  
We are most wretched ; wretched most in this,  
That, tho’ we strive, we cannot burn to Thee  
In love as Thou to us and all that is.”

In that same night, when I was fallen asleep  
After such agony of yearning prayer,  
A voice came gliding through my slumber deep,  
A voice, a glow, a waft of vital air.

I woke ; and, raising gloom-attempered eyes,  
They blinked at lustre, but no form could see.  
The Voice rang singing sweet, “Awake, arise !  
And come out hither, and be ever free !”

I stood—the fetters kept no longer hold ;  
I walked straight forward through the dungeon-  
wall,  
And through the others—brass and iron and  
gold ;  
And passing thro’ them felt them not at all.

And all the while that Voice sang full and sweet,  
    "Come forth, come forth, poor captives everyone!  
Oh, shut not fast your ears when I entreat!  
    Come forth, and breathe the air and see the sun!"

I thought myself quite free, when, lo! I found  
    An adamant barrier foil me there:  
I could not see, could scarcely feel its bound,—  
    A wall, a curtain woven of pure air.

What poignant anguish pierced my blissful trance,  
    Thus baffled at the very verge of Heaven!—  
"Dear Angel of divine deliverance,  
    Assist me here, for I in vain have striven!"

Louder and sweeter rang the glorious Voice,  
    "Has one, then, wakened up to feel my breath?  
All holy spirits in your choirs rejoice;  
    Another soul is saved from bonds and death!"

The Spirit was beside me dazzling bright;  
    It burned the way before me through that wall;  
And I was free beneath the heaven of night,  
    Nor felt the barrier I passed thro' at all:

But looking back could see a wall-veil then,  
    As smooth as glass, opaquely black as jet,  
'Towering on high beyond my farthest ken;  
    But know not by what name to call it yet.

As one who almost swooning drinks of wine,  
I drank in deep the universal air  
And glorious freedom of the world divine ;  
Then fell down worshipping the Splendour there.

It raised me gently as a wounded dove,—  
“ Revere, but worship not, a fellow soul :  
Adore the Infinite Wisdom, Truth, and Love,  
The life and breath and being of the Whole.”

It was compact of such intense pure flame,  
That still mine eyes were shut to It, in sooth ;  
The ardour from It thrilled through all my frame  
Like new and purer blood, new life, new youth.

It kissed my brow with such a ravishment  
Of burning bliss that half I swooned away,  
And felt my spirit soaring forth unpent  
From its dissolving funeral urn of clay.

“ Henceforward re-assume thy primal dower !  
I bless thee unto perfect liberty  
Of holiest faith and love : 'tis in thy power  
As thou art now, in heart to ever be.

“ On earth's most miry ways shall slip thy feet,  
This brow itself may catch the evil stain ;  
But faith and love can burn thee pure and sweet :  
—Farewell, until we may unite again !”

How did these gracious words beneficent  
Fill me with dread and agony !—I cried,  
“Great Spirit, if it be Thy blest intent  
To save me truly, leave not yet my side !

“Stay with me yet awhile, Deliverer, Thou !—  
I am too weak with chains, too blind with gloom,  
For unassisted life ; left lonely now,  
I must relapse into that hideous tomb.

“Or at the least, disrobe awhile Thy form  
Of its too much effulgence, that my sight  
May meet Thy face ; and so thro’ every storm  
Preserve one Guiding-star, one Beacon-light.”

“Because I burn in my pure nakedness,  
Thou canst not meet me with thy mortal gaze . . .  
Thy prayer is granted : a material dress,  
A form of shadowing gloom my soul arrays.”

Oh bliss ! I saw Her thro’ the sevenfold veil ;—  
A mighty Seraph shining ruby-clear,  
Clothed in majestic wings of golden mail ;  
A sun within the midnight atmosphere.

But still her countenance I scarce could scan,  
For living glories of the golden hair,  
And rapture of the eyes cerulean  
As solemn summer heavens burning bare.

Around her head a crystal circlet shone,  
Fore-crested with a pure white flying dove :  
In emeralds and in sapphires writ thereon,  
Athwart the brow, one word was flaming,—Love.

And when she spoke her voice was now so sweet  
In soft low music, tremulous with sighs,  
That one might dreaming hear his Mother greet  
With such a voice his soul to Paradise.

“ He is so weak, so weak who should be strong,  
Weak as a babe, faint-hearted, almost blind ;  
The curse of previous bondage clingeth long :  
He must not lapse into that den behind.

“ The sun indeed shines ever in the sky :  
But when the realm is turned from him to night,  
When moon and stars gleam faint and cold on high  
Or else are veiled by stormy clouds from sight ;

“ The traveller then through field and sombre wood  
Finds his own poor dim lamp best guide his feet ;  
The man at home his household taper good  
For useful light, his household fire for heat.

“ Celestial flowers are set in earthly clay :  
However small the circle of a life,  
If it be whole it shall expand for aye ;  
And all the Heavens are furled in Man and Wife.

“So thou, the man, the circle incomplete,  
Shalt find thy other segment and be whole ;  
Thy manhood with her womanhood shall meet  
And form one perfect self-involving soul.

“Thy love shall grow by feeling day by day  
Celestial love, thro’ human, blessing thee ;  
Thy faith wax firm by witnessing alway  
Triumphant faith for ever glad and free.

“By her obedience thy soul shall learn  
How far humility transcendeth pride ;  
By her pure intuitions shall discern  
The fatal flaws of reason unallied.

“Thou shalt see strength in weakness conquering,  
The bravest action with the tenderest heart,  
Self-sacrifice unconscious hallowing  
The lightest playing of the meanest part.

“Chastity, purity, and holiness  
Shall shame thy virile grossness ; and the power  
Of beauty in the spirit and its dress  
Reveal all virtue lovely as a flower.

“Till love for her shall teach thee love for all ;  
Till perfect reverence for her shall grow  
To faith in God which nothing can appal,  
Tho’ His green world be dark with sin and woe.

“Children, by all they are to glad and grieve,  
Shall teach thee what a loving Father is,  
And how to give is better than receive :—  
I bless thee with all household charities.

“A priceless boon ! and, like such boons to men,  
A glorious blessing or a fatal curse :  
Thou canst not sink back into yon vile den ;  
Sinking at all, thou sinkest to a worse.”

When thus her words were ended, it might seem  
That I was lapsing from a heavenly trance  
Into some scarce less blissful earthly dream,  
So wonderfully did a change advance.

Her supernatural beauty grew less bright,  
Tho’ scarce less beautiful ; the fiery name  
Died out like fire ; the wings of flashing light  
Were slowly back-withdrawn into her frame.

The Spirit of the empyréan Heaven  
Was incarnated into human birth,  
The purest Seraph of the loftiest Seven  
Became a maiden of this lower earth.

Yet still she was the same, thus different :  
The pinions there, tho’ not put forth in power ;  
The glory there, tho’ in the body pent ;—  
Both sheathed thus safely till the fitting hour :



And in her mien, and on her face and brow,  
And in her violet eyes, as clear the sign  
Of Love supreme and infinite shone now  
As when it blazed in jewel fires divine.

I woke. A tender hand all silently  
Had drawn the curtain and dispersed the gloom ;  
The whole triumphant morning in a sea  
Of warmth and splendour dazzled thro' the room.

The dearest face, the best-belovèd eyes,  
Were shining down upon me where I lay ;—  
Aglow with love and rapturous surprise,  
Seeing my fever was all passed away.

*November 1859.*

# A FESTIVAL OF LIFE

" The One remains, the many change and pass ;  
Heaven's light for ever shines, Earth's shadows fly ;  
Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass,  
Stains the white radiance of Eternity,  
Until Death tramples it to fragments. . . ."

SHELLEY'S *Adonais*.

THE wind, in long gusts roaring,  
Over the sea-waste hurled with passionate might  
The torrent-rush of ponderous rain down-pouring  
Through that unbounded darkness of wild night. . . .  
I gazed into the tumult ; seeing naught ;  
But mastered by it into solemn thought,  
Such as can seldom brood in garish day,—  
    Whose myriad sounds and forms and hues  
    Their sparkling sensual wine infuse,  
Till the soul drowns in its drunken clay.  
Night scorns to pamper fleshly cars and eyes  
With earth's poor store of fleeting luxuries,  
    Appealing to the Soul alone  
    In its stupendous Monotone,  
Austerely murmuring spells of timeless mysteries.

Long sightlessly outgazing  
I stood, when through the cloven dark, behold,  
A dome of purest crystal lifted, blazing  
With living splendours—purple, jasper, gold,  
And crowning all, serenely arched on high,  
A solemn depth of sapphire like a sky.  
Far-piercing tremulous lines of watery light  
And sheeted lustres wild and riven,  
Like sunset glories tempest-driven,  
It pours against the streaming gloom of night.  
Sustaining this aërial canopy  
White marble columns gleam unsteadfastly ;  
Yet by its hovering poise in air,  
It seems self-borne to revel there,  
Surmounting furious blasts over the lurid sea.

I stand by it envaulted. . . .  
The palace thrills throughout from dome to floor  
In swells of jubilant harmony, exalted  
By the storm's intermittent clash and roar :  
How the full volumes of orchestral sound  
Outsurge continuously and sweep around !  
As clouds by winds, see, swayed by their sweet  
measure,  
All floating, gliding, sinking, heaving,  
The countless Masquers interweaving  
An Iris-coloured maze of dizzy pleasure

About the sea-like floor of marble green,  
All waved with multitudinous waves, whose sheen  
    And restless shades the vision cheats ;  
    They seem to flow beneath the feet  
Which thrid that graceful dance of festive life  
    serene.

    Around the shorelike border,  
Opening to arched recess and far aisle dim,  
The feast-spread tables range in stately order.  
What golden bowls, a-tremble to the brim,  
Beneath the lamps in constellations shine  
With jewels and the jewel-gleams of wine !  
What fruits are clustered into glorious piles  
    Throughout the feast's magnificence,  
    On whose uncumbered affluence  
Flowers shed the grace of their ethereal smiles !  
Round the broad tables sumptuous couches flow,  
Soft as June clouds, suffused with many a glow,  
    Of crimson, amber, violet dark :  
    Deep-dyed from each recess's arc  
The massy curtains fall, down-sweeping full and  
    low.

    And children sport there tameless. . . .  
O happy, happy children ! happier far,  
Possessed by unsought joyance free and aimless,  
Than those tall masks with laboured pleasures arc.

Through feast and dance they flit with shining faces,  
Wreathing, unwreathing, in capricious chases,  
With ringing laughters at their own swift wiles.

And yet a few, of strange grave mood,  
Pace in shadowy solitude

Those many-columned labyrinthine aisles,  
Which, opening through the oriels, link to zone  
The gem-bright feast with dark grey caverned stone :

Though scarcely man or woman dares  
That dusk instinct with lightning-glaires,  
Down whose far desert vistas waves and tempest  
moan.

The dome's broad-soaring lustres  
Are poised upon one massive coil of gold ;  
A ruby-crested serpent, starred with clusters  
Of flashing gems ; its mighty bulk outrolled  
In cyclic rest for ever ; while, consumed,  
The End in the Beginning lies entombed :  
Gorgeous the symbol of Eternity !

The grand pilastered sweep of wall  
Lives and glows around the hall,  
Divinely pictured ; earth and sea and sky  
Have yielded the best grandeurs and delights  
Of all their rolling seasons, days and nights,  
To make these fields of space expand  
Into an infinite Wonder-land

By their infinitude of dream-surpassing sights.

Sculptures serenely gracious  
From out the flowing draperies' regal dyes,  
Around the banquet-circle cool and spacious,  
Gleam half-revealed to my enchanted eyes.  
How can the festival flow undelayed  
Amidst the heavenly visions here displayed?  
How is it not rapt still, in breathless trance?—  
    What scenes of rock, field, sky and sea,  
    Flung round in infinite harmony!—  
That wood where uncouth creatures sport and dance  
In the weird dimness streaked with silvern rays:  
That Eden quivering in the noontide blaze,  
    Nymphs languid in its fountain-bowers:  
    That sea-built City's domes and towers  
Consuming in the Sunset's slow-breathed fiery haze!

“Evohe! our high Palace!  
We dance, we dance, with dance-exulting feet!  
We grow immortal, draining bowl and chalice  
Of this life-burning wine-blood nectar-sweet,  
And banqueting on this ambrosial food!  
While ever and anon, in rapturous mood  
Outstealing from the revel, pair by pair  
    Hide far within some dim recess,  
    And, faint with fervid eagerness,  
Unlock the wildering wealth of love they share!  
What though black Night inspheres us,—storm  
    and rain

Assaulting this fair Heaven with fury vain ?  
Our-music-storm poured strong and fast  
Can balance well the outer blast,  
And yon resplendent dome for evermore sustain !”

With clash of wine-cups ringing,  
So rose from flower-crowned feasters swaying  
there  
The fervent Pæan, swelled with choral singing  
By many a gallant Knight and lady fair.  
What strength of wisdom and sure self-reliance  
Could make *these* bold to fling such gay defiance  
To all the dreadful Powers of ancient Night ?—  
*These*—pigmies swarming in the deep  
Beneath their own dome’s burning sweep ;  
*These*—motes invisible beneath Heaven’s height !  
But ere was ended the impetuous song,  
A tremor ran electric through the throng :  
With pallid cheek and restless eye,  
With urgent voices loud and high,  
Fear made them more and more the vauntful  
strains prolong.

“Ha ! what a burst of thunder !  
How the swift lightnings blanched our splendours  
pale !  
Reweave the links of dance, too long asunder !  
Let loose again the music’s life-gale ! . . .

But who are these, this never-bidden Pair,  
Unnoticed while our joy-song dimmed the air?  
Who are these masked in such mysterious wise?  
What twain of all our company  
Are missing from the revelry?—  
They have assumed this melancholy guise  
To shed fantastic wildness on our sport.  
All here!—then who are Ye, not of our court?  
Whence come ye? wherefore thus invade  
Our blissful brightness with the shade  
Of sombre masks and robes, and joy-contemning  
port?”

Silent and dark and solemn,—  
While the mixed tumult of amazement died  
In deep hushed awe,—firm-planted as the column  
Of dusky-splendid porphyry at their side,  
The Strangers stood, absorbing all the scene  
With slow calm eyes and wonder-baffling mien;  
Two awful Spirits of the outer Night!  
For age-like moments that ensued  
The Saturnalian multitude  
Was frozen into marble undelight;  
Continued numb with terror,—lost and drowned  
In that weird breathless agony profound,  
Like a Nightmare’s stifling pain  
Crushing, maddening heart and brain,  
When utter, monstrous Silence yawns like death  
around,



Till life, resurgent, tingled  
In burning blood through every shrunken vein ;  
And one deep panting from all breasts commingled  
To mark remission of that deadly strain  
And over tension of the subtle strings  
Whose music is the life of living things. . . .  
Again with joy and power from secret caves  
    The full dance-harmonies outstreaming  
    Woke the Masquers from their dreaming,  
Again they floated on the buoyant waves.  
And all, it seemed, with fiercer yearning thirst,  
Triumphant o'er the pallid swoon now burst,  
    Seized the fiery cup of bliss  
    Mantling high to greet their kiss ;  
And in delirious draughts awe doubt, and fear  
immerst.

The dim voluptuous languor  
Of clouds surcharged with perfumes, slow and dense,  
Uprolled from precious burnings, veiled the clangour,  
The harmonised confusion grown intense,  
Reckless, and surging with a wild desire  
Most keenly hungered when most fed, like fire ;  
—Veiled the vast revel, even from their seeing,  
    Whose Bacchic frenzy broken loose  
    Was now the element profuse  
That breathed it into such portentous being.

And few of all involved in this rich screen  
 Saw now the Strangers of mysterious mien ;  
     Whose dark intolerable eyes  
     Burned through the tumult and disguise,  
 Commanding like Omniscience all the wildered  
 scene.

But power to me was given  
 To see, to pierce the gloomy robes austere,  
 Which (as our world's gross night hides Hell and  
     Heaven,  
 From mortals sick with longing, wild with fear)  
 Concealed these Two in undistinguished shade.  
 I saw the Vision of a Queen, arrayed  
 In midnight purple laced with snowy cloud,  
     Which as her bosom heaved shone far  
     With purest jewels, star on star. . . .  
 Grand Queen ; dread Pythoness : her tall form bowed :  
 Transcendent beauty lost in desolate grace :  
 Her long dark hair thrown down about a face  
     So pale with awful mysteries  
     Of perfect love and woe and bliss,  
 That my own heart grew wild panting for her embrace.

But, Heaven be our protection  
 Against the Demon standing at Her side !—  
 By what dread lunacies of blind affection,  
 Or monstrous Destiny to Her allied !

Infernal Horror !—His rent forehead crowned  
With hideous snakes writhing and interwound,  
A many crested coil distinguishless ;  
    While through black cloud with red fire seared  
    His vast and fleshless frame appeared  
Momently shuddering into Nothingness.  
On His disfeatured face was stamped a grin  
Of unimagined foulness, hate and sin,  
    Anguish, greed, and rage and scorn,  
And fiendish triumph most forlorn. . . .  
Thus stood They side by side amidst the festal din.

    Wilder and ever wilder  
The revel surged beneath its glowing dome ;  
And still the outside rage grew ever wilder,  
As if all powers that have in Night their home,  
Lightning and thunder, rain and stormy blast,  
Held *their* wild revel in its sightless vast. . . .  
Then those Two Shapes were moved from stony rest ;  
    And, keeping still their sable shroud,  
    Moved forward mingling with the crowd ;  
Each with a strange keen eagerness repress.  
He seized an aged yet carousing Knight ;  
She kissed a young girl's forehead drooping white ;  
    These dancing linked in languid grace,  
    Those hurrying forth with swerveless pace,  
Soon through a curtained portal passed from out  
our sight.

There rose shrill lamentation  
From revellers fixed awaiting their return ;  
Inexplicable grief and consternation  
Possessed them,—dread yet keen desire to learn  
The fate of those led forth so suddenly ;  
And tremulous murmurings spread. . . . Then all  
might see  
Those Shapes mysterious coming back alone. . . .  
The Silence gave one reckless shout,  
“The Knight was old and wearied out,  
The Maid was sick and faint some hours ago :  
These have but ushered them to rest and peace,  
In sooth full kindly—But why therefore cease  
The banquet and the dance? Away !  
Every moment of delay  
Is squandered from our joy’s brief unreturning  
lease.”

The rude spell fearless-hearted  
Swayed back the riant feast-joy’s ebbing flood :  
But one—the Lover of the girl departed—  
Approached the Woman desperately, and sued  
With passion such as will not be denied  
For reunion with his promised bride.  
She led him forth in Her divine embrace ;  
And then returned without the boy,  
Inspired by some exalted joy,  
Which shone with holy splendour in Her face,

And bounded in Her port and heaved Her  
breast. . . .

But of the remnant every one repress  
In silence of uneasy thought  
The wonder that within him wrought :  
The mystery had power to awe down open quest.

Thenceforth a voice of wailing,  
Of grief that spurned all comfort, still increast,  
For dear ones lost for ever, countervailing  
The shouted songs and laughters of the feast ;  
Whose wine ran like a mountain rill, which grows  
In strong and swift abundance as it flows.  
For the dread Strangers thinned the joyous rout ;  
With stern and Fateful ministry  
Removing almost momentarily  
Man, woman, child, youth, maid,—selected out  
By some inscrutable and lawless law.  
Many to Her went willingly, I saw ;  
And fascinated by the bliss  
Of Her tender, holy kiss,  
Welcomed with solemn joy their doom's mysterious  
awe.

But it was shameful, fearful,  
To mark of those He gestured to His side  
How many shrank, with ravings wildly tearful  
Of idiot pleas ; while stalwart feastmen cried

“Grant us but one more hour of wine-fired glee !  
Others may fail ; but we, Iacchus ! we  
Could mount high revels with the mounting sun.”

A few with high-wrought calmness grand  
Took His stretched imperious hand,  
And seemed, though then all powerless and undone,  
To cope with His Omnipotence of Fate,  
Yielding at once with undissembled hate.

But trembling wretches clustered near,  
Already summoned forth by Fear  
To time-destroying pangs no doom could aggravate.

O infinite tempest raging !  
O awful Visitants from Heaven and Hell !  
These mortals scorn and mock your dark presaging,  
And wreak high feast-strains on their own deep knell.  
See, through the clouds of incense wildly glancing,  
What Moenads with wild cries are wildly dancing !  
All masks off-torn, their white limbs flash and shine,  
Flung out tossing through the whirls ;  
Dishevelled tresses, wanton curls,  
A-flame with flowers and dripping crimson wine,  
Brush naked bosoms with their fiery trace, —  
White, perfect breasts, full-swelled to the embrace  
Which those wild eyes of humid light  
Fiercely passionate now invite :—  
The Palace, through their whirlwind, seems to reel  
in space.

Alas, how sad and dreary  
Waned the whole scene there as the Night grew  
late!  
When many of the Masquers, sick and weary,  
Lay longing that those Ministers of Fate  
Would choose them for removal: when of all  
Whom They had taken from the festival  
No one returned; though mourners fiercely craved  
The never answering Shapes of Black  
To bring them, but a moment, back,  
And on the threshold of the Night-storm waved  
Their feeble torches, quenched as soon as lit,  
Seeking lost darlings through the Infinite:  
And when at times some dreadful ghost,  
Imaging the loved and lost,  
Would through the startled feast with bodeful ges-  
tures flit. . . .

The lamps were quickly failing;  
The pictures were weird shadows on the wall;  
In the grey stone-cold dawn-gleams unprevailing  
The draperies seemed a vast funereal pall  
Flapping about the corpselike sculptures wan:  
The floor, the cupola which glimmering shone,  
The rain-dark marbles, in the tempest thrilled:  
Where late the noble feast was spread  
Lay scattered flower-blooms dim and dead,  
'Mid stains of sullen-oozing wine outspilled

From urns and goblets shattered and o'erthrown,  
And fragments in a sick confusion strown ;  
    And lost in all the ghastly waste,  
    On couches tottering and displaced,  
Flushed victims of the orgy, helpless, senseless,  
    prone.

    Yet evermore those Strangers  
Went gathering in their harvest ; and no less,  
As men who face to face with deadly dangers  
Inebriate their terror and distress,  
A few kept up the revel with a madness  
Of reeling, shrieking glee which was not glad-  
    ness.  
Till—portents of the near approaching Doom—  
    Wailings, laughter, wild and fierce,  
    Through the storm-swung darkness pierce,  
And spectres people the dull flickering gloom. . . .  
A deep foreboding hush pervades the place :  
To that dis-covered Twain in one wild race  
    All reel along the quaking floor :  
    There grows a mighty booming roar,  
As I am rapt away into the outer space.

    With storm and fire and thunder  
These rearward billows of Night's Ocean dash  
Against the Palace : it is rent asunder,  
Rent, shattered, with an instantaneous crash.



On, undelayed, exultingly they sweep,  
Whirling its fragments through their wild waste  
deep :

Precipitant in their stupendous sway

The glowing fragments crystalline,

Gold, jewels, precious marbles, shine

Like showering meteors ; high and far away,

Portentous, the Snake's blazing wheel is borne,

In dalliance with the lightnings whose fierce scorn

Smites into view wan wailing shades . . .

The whole Night-Chaos hurrying fades

Over the livid sea, before the dismal morn.

“O utter desolation !

O blighted beauty, splendour, triumph, bliss !

Alas, the gay and thoughtless congregation

Flung out unsheltered to the dark Abyss !

Bright Vision faded ! never more can shine

A joy-insphering Palace so divine.”

Lamenting thus, I sank in sleep or swoon. . . .

I wake—The isle and ocean spread

Level and bare : but overhead

The solemn Heaven of sapphire-burning noon

Has bent its dome's immeasurable height ;

A few calm clouds o'erfraught with living light

Melt in the quivering crystalline ;

Beneath the Eternal Sun divine,

Insphering half the world in glory and delight.

This is the Vision solely,  
Trancing all aspiration with content !  
Beauty all-perfect, blessedness all-holy,  
Are veiled beyond that crystal firmament.  
The breathless concave yearneth to the Hymn  
Of all the Hosts of Stars and Seraphim ;  
The Hallelujah's raptured Monotone,  
    To whose vast swell the world-strown Sea  
    Of Æther throbs eternally,  
Circling the footstool of that nameless Throne  
Whose veil's far shadow floods this noon with  
    light. . . .  
—O self-sequestered Earth ! O gross, weak sight !  
    For which beneath such heavenly day  
    Yawneth fathomless for aye  
A spectre-haunted gulf of Sphere-completing Night.

*February 1857.*

# TASSO TO LEONORA

FROM HIS DUNGEON ; IN MISERY AND DISTRACTION.

" Ha ! thy frozen pulses flutter  
With a love thou dar'st not utter. . . .  
Lady, whose imperial brow  
Is endiademed with woe !

. . . . .  
All the wide world beside us  
Show like multitudinous  
Puppets passing from a scene ;  
What but mockery can they mean ? "

SHELLEY—*Misery ; a Fragment.*

NOBLEST Lady, throned above  
All my soaring hopes of love ;  
Could you read my fate's dark truth,  
You would give me scornless ruth.

Dawn by dawn I wake to say,—  
I *will* drive all thought away  
Of Her I cannot hope to win ;  
Vain regret is coward sin.

Yet each night I yearn to be  
Wandering far alone with thee,  
Through still Dreamland's dimmest grove  
Moonlit by thy heavenly love.

Ah, the long days dark and cold !  
Life, bereft of thee, unsouled—  
Save for Memory !—crawls on slow,  
One sick swoon of barren woe.

Ah, the long nights dreadly still !  
When sleep flies my frantic will ;  
When through filmy dreams its sting  
Consciousness darts quivering.

But when rich Sleep's nectared balm  
Bathes my weary heart in calm ;  
Life, Strength, Joy are all re-found,  
With thy pure love glory-crowned.

Thus thou hast my soul unsphered ;  
Waking life is dead and weird ;  
Deathlike trance is life :—ah me !  
All our being seems to be  
Interfused with mockery.

Yes—as Love is truer far  
Than all other things ; so are  
Life and Death, the World and Time,  
Mere false shows in some great Mime,  
By dreadful mystery sublime.

Do not scorn me, Sweet, I crave ;  
Perhaps this woe may somewhat rave :  
Yet how should It?—I can feel  
Truth itself at times less real.

Do not scorn me,—for behold !  
Near and nearer swiftly rolled  
Solemn glooms of that great Night  
No false Day shall dawn to blight.

Then the everlasting sleep,  
Shall our souls in rapture steep,  
Then in tranced Eternity  
Thou shalt be made One with me !

Play our parts out in this Mime !—  
Spectres mocking spectral Time,  
Whose grim mockery keeps us hurled  
Reeling through our spectral World.

What a Theatre expands !  
For its Stage all seas and lands ;  
By the moon and high stars lit ;  
Vaulted by the Infinite.

Heavens ! and I must bear a part,  
With my restless passionate heart  
Coffined in this foul dead den  
From the surging seas of men.

Well . . . we all must act our time  
On the unreal Stage sublime ;  
None of us is what he seems,  
Dramatising frenzy-dreams.

By such monsters fleered, stung, tost,  
In such wildering mazes lost ;  
How superbly serious all  
Threads the restless, senseless brawl  
Of our rabid Carnival !

Noble, beautiful, serene,  
Thou must play the part of Queen ;  
Crowned with unreal gems and gold,  
Phantom purples round thee rolled.

Sweep with stately step the stage ;  
Act great passions, love and rage,  
With yon crowd of half-souled things  
Masked as nobles, princes, kings.

I must act a wretch forlorn,  
Wealthless, rankless, lowly born ;  
Cursed more with a soul and sense  
Bounteous, regal, too intense :

Ay, a woeful Wretch indeed ;  
Say a starved incarnate Need,  
Ever with consummate art  
In his strange half-tragic part  
Living on an empty heart !

Well, Dear, brief must be our task ;  
Little matters in what mask  
We may rant our mimic rage  
On our unsubstantial Stage.

So, Sweet Love, sustain your rôle,  
Freeze the pulses of your soul ;  
Fair, grand, queenly dignified,  
Case yourself in marble pride.

I—the while,—by evidence  
Of my purest love intense,  
Sure that when the Play is o'er  
You are mine for evermore—

I will madly waste and moan,  
Pouring out against thy throne  
All my life of love,—flung back  
In wild foam o'er gulfs of black.

Let some hollow princely mask,  
In thine Alpine sunshine bask ;  
Blight me with well-feignèd scorn  
Let me pine and rage forlorn :

Have it counted lunacy,  
My audacious love for Thee !  
In a lazar-dungeon thrust,  
Make me mad to prove you just.

Brava, Dearest ! noble, grand !  
Played with wondrous self-command !  
O great Theatre world-filled,  
Whom her spell holds rapt and thrilled,  
Shout the plaudits too long stilled !

I, too,—do not I act well  
All the horrors of this Hell ?  
Act so well, Love, that I feel  
Sometimes as if all were real !

What a sickly, foolish fear !  
Love soon re-assures me, Dear :  
I must ape such anguish vile  
With an inward settled smile.



Do I seem to writhe with pain  
Under thy assumed disdain ?  
Do I seem, indeed, to be  
Far too mean for hope of thee ?

Do I really seem to brood  
In this dark den's solitude,  
Frenzied by the foetid gloom  
Of such hideous living tomb ?

Do I seem to cringe, and crave  
Mercy from the poor dull slave,  
Who, disguised in sceptered power,  
Acts thy brother for the hour ?

Yet I scorn him : and serene,  
Far above this mimic scene  
With its shows of Space and Time,  
Dwell with thee in love sublime.

Ah ! your part so grand and fine  
Must be harder yet than mine ;  
Bitter, but to *seem*, in sooth,  
False to love's eternal truth :  
Ah ! you have my saddest ruth.

Still, our parts are so forth writ  
In this Mime whose venom'd wit  
Our poor wits so far transcends.  
On its acting life depends,  
Wild it is, but soon it ends.

Joy! the Play must soon be done!  
Then the lamps called Stars and Sun  
Shall be quenched in perfect gloom  
By the grand foreclosing Doom;

Then the Stage of land and sea  
Shall down-vanish utterly;  
Then the fretted azure roof  
Roll off like a burning woof;

Then the serried multitude  
Surge out in a vast dim flood;—  
All, all fade and vanish quite,  
Leaving void and silent Night.

Then, once more alone, my Sweet,  
We shall in the strange dark meet:  
You will doff your tinsel'd pride,  
I shall throw my rags aside.

Then in silent darkness deep  
Comes the everlasting sleep,  
Comes the inexpressive bliss  
Of our union's perfectness !

Time's loud turbid stream shall flow,  
With its perils, strife and woe,  
Far from where our Soul then lies  
Tranced in still Eternities :

Tho', soft breathed from far away,  
Its dim soothing murmurs may  
Lull us to profounder rest,  
Swaying with the Ocean's breast.

For we seek home after this ;  
Clinging with a fonder kiss  
For the parting which so pained,  
For the cold neglect you feigned.

We two only,—Woman, Man,  
Wedded ere the Mime began,  
Heaven-created Man and Wife  
For our whole true timeless life :

Soul of soul and heart of heart ;  
Each alone a wretched part,  
Lifeless, useless, maimed, unright,  
Ever yearning to unite

In the perfect spherul Whole,  
Living, self-sufficient Soul,  
Swayed through Æther crystalline  
Circling restful in the shine  
Of the central Sun Divine. . . .

What, although this trance at times  
Must be broken by such mimes ?  
What, though we must earn by these  
Our reposeful ecstasies ?

Dearest, all the false cold days,  
With their bitter mocking Plays,  
Swiftly die to glorious Night  
When we meet in new delight.

So two actors, Man and Wife,  
Mimic freely rage and strife,  
Suffering, terror, madness, death  
Whatsoe'er the fable saith :

Earning thus wherewith to feed  
That which is their life indeed,—  
Long, calm, rich with love intense,  
Secret from the shallow sense  
Of the blatant audience.

Ah, my weak bewildered heart !  
Do I act my monstrous part  
With too earnest lifelike truth ?—  
Darling, bless me with thy ruth.

Yes, at times my heart is torn  
By thy well-pretended scorn :  
Soothe this foolish heart of mine  
With some secret loving sign.

Perhaps it feeleth Love to be  
Of such sacred verity,  
That thy merely feigned untruth  
Frets it like a serpent-tooth.

Grant it some dear secret sign  
Which no other can divine,—  
But a word, a flower, to prove  
That you are my own, own Love.

Act thy strange part not so well ;—  
Even now, with pangs of Hell,  
I dread that your neglect is true,  
Doubting you, my Soul's Soul, *you* !

But I strangle such base doubt. . . .  
How the drear plot lingers out !  
What a Chaos, baffling thought ;  
Real with spectral interwrought ! . . .

Lo, the wondrous Universe !  
Hear its mystic powers rehearse  
Sweet and subtle melodies,  
Vast and solemn harmonies.

Glorious shifting sceneries, see ;  
And the dome's infinity,  
Lamp'd by all the rhythmic quires  
Of those unconsuming fires !

Mark the stony Fate that broods,  
Mark the angel multitudes,  
Watching for the tragic range  
Of impassioned strife and change.

O sublimest Theatre !  
Vexed with the insensate stir  
Of this doleful Mime distraught,  
By such pigmy puppets wrought.

Pigmies : and they feel it well,  
While their hollow vauntings swell :  
How uneasily they roam  
Through its grandeurs, not at home !—

Restless in its crystal calms,  
Trembling at its thunder-psalms,  
Cowering from its noon-poured light,  
Shuddering through its scenic night.

How their poor rants quail and die  
Far beneath its solemn sky !  
How their clouds of passion all,  
Tumid grandeurs, burst and fall  
From its deep-based mountain-wall !

Blood and filth defile the Stage,  
Filth of lust and blood of rage ;  
Which they will not understand  
Are but self-pollution, and  
Suicide at second-hand.

Every one there, bad or good,  
Is by all misunderstood,  
Knowing not himself,—yet strives  
To scheme the law for countless lives.

Each is different from each,  
None hears right another's speech :  
Yet all fume and fight for aye,  
With anguish, hatred, death, dismay,  
To make others be as they.

Every step they take perplex  
Taints the freedom of the next ;  
Every thought and word and deed  
Curbeth all that shall succeed :

Yet they still must move, nor pause,  
By the Drama's rigorous laws ;  
Yet no true Life can there be  
Save in thoughts and deeds quite free.

There work foolish Hate and Ill,  
Eager, subtle, fierce of will ;  
Good and Love, alas, behold,  
Flagging, wavering, languish cold.—

Love !—O Seraphs looking down,  
Who of all that wear the crown,  
That have won the sacred kiss  
Which should symbol Love's pure bliss,  
Even dream what true Love is ?

Sternly real the galling pain  
Of the vanquished bondman's chain ;  
But the Victor's diadem  
Ever lacks its crowning gem.

Nearly all the noblest parts  
Ruined by bad heads or hearts ;  
Those in whom redemption lies  
Chained, with cankering energies,  
From sublime activities.



Each aspiring burst, swayed back,  
Soon plods round the old drear track ;  
Hope dies,—strangled in the knot  
Of such ever-ravelled plot.

Did no sequent acts extend  
On unto a perfect End  
Far beyond these brief life-days,  
What a hopeless, ghastly maze !

Yes ! did'st Thou not light the scene,  
Leonora, O my Queen !  
One deep sigh would rend my heart,  
“ Oh, that I had had no part ! ” . . .

As it is,—to keep, perchance,  
Sane amid the dizzy dance—  
Musc I this fixed truth sublime,  
All is but a mocking Mime.

Yet foul demons in my ear  
Hiss most wordless hints of fear,—  
That this hideous dream's wild strife  
Is our soul's substantial life !

How the moment's thought appals !—  
That these stifling dungeon-walls  
Are of real during stone ;  
That I fester here alone ;  
That you cannot be my own !

No ; it is a fiendish lie.  
God our Father reigns on high :  
You are truer than my faith. . . .  
Oh, were life untwined from death !

But, you cannot scorn me, Dear,  
Though I sink in doubt and fear ?  
You too know, this mad Mime done,  
We shall evermore be one ?

Cling, cling fast to this dear faith,  
Rock of life in sea of death :  
Our mazed web of doom is wrought  
Under God's directing thought.

For were life no flitting dream,  
Were things truly what they seem,  
Were not all this World-scene vast  
But a shade in Time's stream glass'd ;

Were the moods we now display  
Less phantasmal than the clay,  
In which our poor spirits clad  
Act this Vision, wild and sad,  
I must be mad, mad,—how mad!

*November 1856.*

## A HAPPY POET

DRIVEN by mysterious care and restless pain  
The World rolls round me full of noise and strife,  
Racking what is not loss to dubious gain :  
I live apart my self-fulfilling life  
Serenely happy, breathing golden air  
Unvext by these dark storms of pain and care.

The tumult whirls for ever to and fro :  
I see it all in vision ; strangely wild  
And incoherent, yet by some rich glow  
Of vigour, thought and passion reconciled ;  
Its mystery also, wherein dreams Delight,  
Brings dear old friends, tho' dimly, back to sight.

O happy-dowered Soul ! whom God doth call  
To life's imperial Banquet as a guest  
Greeted with gladness in its lofty Hall ;  
Bathed clean and cool, sprinkled with odours, drest  
In fair white folds of free and flowing grace,  
The festal raiment of the splendid place ;

Who then is couched 'midst wise and valiant friends,  
In place of honour near the glorious Throne  
Wherefrom the Host such kingly welcome sends  
That all may feel His treasures all their own ;  
And who is further gifted to divine  
The subtlest savours of the fruit and wine.

Is it not strange ? I could more amply tell  
Such woes of men as I discern or dream,  
Than this great happiness I know so well,  
Which is in truth profounder than they seem ;  
And which abides for ever pure and deep,  
'Beneath all dreams of wakefulness or sleep.

For this whole world so vast and complicate,  
With every being nourished on its breast,  
With all its mighty workings-out of Fate,  
With that one Soul in all its life exprest,  
Must surely all be mine, and mine alone ;  
Its power and joy are so indeed my own.

Spring, summer, autumn, winter, float for aye,  
Weaving continually their wondrous robe,  
Of purple Night inwrought with golden Day  
About our earth, whose calm and mighty globe  
Through all the World-strown æther crystalline  
Floats ever 'circling round the sun divine.

The faint voluptuous trance of summer noon,  
    Young spring's blithe tenderness so green and fair,  
The golden wealth of quiet autumn boon,  
    The star-keen life of winter glittering bare,  
Carol harmonious beauty and delight,  
And proffer all their treasures as my right.

The birds rejoice in singing for my joy,  
    And shaking sunshine thro' the clustered leaves :  
A brain that never plotteth them annoy,  
    A heart that loves them and their injury grieves  
Swift bird and beast and jewelled insect free  
Full well can trust ; one brotherhood are we.

The flowers all love me, and the trees befriend ;  
    Lily and rose are eager to impart  
By fragrance, colour, or some perfect bend,  
    Delicious secrets that surprise my heart ;  
I muse beneath the forests, and they are  
With all their countless tongues oracular.

Snow-vested mountains mighty and austere  
    Persuade me : Climb us from thy lowly home,  
And we will be thine Altars ; offer here  
    From our pure silence to yon naked dome  
Thy sacrificial thoughts, in breathless awe  
And adoration of Eternal Law.

And evermore old Ocean murmurs me :

Come forth, and love our heritage, my Child ;  
Safe-cherished on my bosom shalt thou be

In death-sweet calms, in tempests dark and wild ;  
Cadence of moonlit waves and mid-sea moan  
Shall dower thy Voice with many a mystic tone.

O vaulted sky, O bounteous land and sea,

O perfect World, the Palace and the Shrine  
Of infinite beauty, truth and mystery,

That flood the soul with yearning bliss divine  
Till it dissolves in their exuberant might,  
As some frail cloud surcharged with noon's full light.

The banquet-hall is noble, and its wine

A nectar worthy of Olympian lyres ;  
Solemn and sacred is the infinite shrine,

With stars immortal for its altar-fires ;  
Yet shrine and palace are scarce noticed things  
When all the guests and worshippers are kings :

Imperial all ; each freer than the sun

Doth live and move, supreme, self-centred, sole ;  
And yet they are my people, every one ;

My life of heart and brain is in the whole ;  
Their hopes, fears, woes, joys, virtues, sins, despairs,  
Their full-orbed lives are mine no less than theirs.

The stern exultance of the thoughtful youth

Enrolled against the tyrants of his land ;

The noblest victor's self-contemning ruth

When fireless eye must gaze on bloody hand ;

The greed of power, the sateless lust of pride,

Whence kingly robes in blood are purple-dyed ;

The deep complacency of subtle skill

In ravelled games, though winning wins a loss ;

The drear perversity with which one's will

With wretched consciousness persists to cross

His own best good, his dearest friends' best prayers,

Devouring sullenly their generous cares ;

The fogs of fear in which their fellows loom

Like threatening monsters, and the firm earth  
yields ;

The mists of hope and love-joy which illumine

With golden strangeness their poor homes and  
fields ;

The sophistries of passion-moulded thought

By which they use to make "I would," "I ought :"

Free childhood's life, so rich it need not ask

Poor thought to justify its flower-fresh grace ;

Youth's yearning tumult when the constant mask

Seems falling first from Nature's glorious face,

The infinite joy and sadness of its strife

To probe the awful secrets of our life ;



The firm deliberate strength of manhood's prime,  
Appraising well the World, its smiles and frowns,—  
Yet for the spoils and triumphs of this Time  
Ceding the heirship of eternal crowns ;  
Old age with Heaven's first rays upon its brow,  
Yet clinging feebly to the worn-out Now :

His nature who from action will refrain  
In plenitude of spiritual thought,  
And his who keepeth every nerve a-strain  
In constant labour, hope and fear distraught ;  
(In thought's pure æther float all worlds of life ;  
The cold eye sees, warm being lives through strife) :

Those eagle spirits native to the skies  
Who drink the Sun's bare splendour, and con-  
temn

Such painted screens as unanointed eyes  
Must interpose between His shine and them,—  
The veils and imageries through which their sense  
Alone can bear the formless light intense ;

(But Suns shine spheric to the eagle-eye,  
Though formless to the owlet-sight, when bare) :  
The soul opprest with its humanity,  
Which must have God's most personal love and  
care ;

The self-ruled souls, that need not supplicate,  
Feeling themselves divine and peers of Fate :

All, all are mine, are Me. How vast the Stage !  
Imperious Doom, unvanquishable Will,  
Throughout the Drama constant battle wage ;  
The Plot evolves with tangled good and ill ;  
The passions overflow the shores of Time ;  
With God the full Solution waits sublime.

If I so much contemplate all the scene  
As if to pleasure me the whole were wrought,  
I gaze upon the actors great and mean  
With reverent love, with unaccusing thought ;  
Their wails and curses are mine own no less  
Than their most tranquil strains of nobleness.

And yet, how ever-gracious is my dower,  
Whose noon-tide bliss consumes its first alloy  
Whose midnight woe by some celestial power  
Enkindles purest stars of solemn joy :  
My lover glows, the world is all-June bowers ;  
My widower weeps, the tears rain April-showers.

For I must sing of all I feel and know ;  
Waiting with Memnon passive near the palms,  
Until the heavenly light doth dawn and grow  
And thrill my silence into mystic psalms ;  
From unknown realms the wind streams sad or  
gay,  
The trees give voice responsive to its sway.

For I must sing ; of mountains, deserts, seas,  
Of rivers ever flowing, ever flowing ;  
Of beasts and birds, of grass and flowers and trees  
For ever fading and for ever growing ;  
Of calm and storm, of night and eve and noon,  
Of boundless space, and sun and stars and moon :

And of the secret sympathies that bind  
All beings to their wondrous dwelling-place ;  
And of the perfect Unity enshrined  
In omnipresence throughout time and space,  
Alike informing with its full control  
The dust, the stars, the worm, the human soul :

And most supremely of my human kin ;  
Their thoughts and deeds, their valours and their  
fears,  
Their griefs and joys, their virtue and their sin,  
Their feasts and wars, their cradles and their biers,  
Their temples, prisons, homes and ships and marts,  
The subtlest windings of their brains and hearts.

In all their faiths and sacraments I see  
Celestial features through the earthly veil,  
In all their dreams some deep reality,  
In all their structures beams that cannot fail,  
In all their thoughts some truth which doth inspire,  
In all their passions sparks of quenchless fire.

For singing, in all thoughts I glimpse the law  
    Ineffable, eternal, veiled behind,  
And robe it in full verse-folds dark with awe ;  
    And singing, in all passions I must find  
New secrets more impassioned, crowning them  
With golden words, a fulgent diadem.

So heartless gibes of infidel mistrust,  
    And quibblings spun by some poor wretch to snare  
His conscience into sanction of his lust,  
    Or bind it into cowardly despair,  
Come forth from me the universal Nay  
That limits all our life's triumphant Yea.

So softest sighings of a maiden's heart  
    When first Love's fingers touch the trembling  
        chords,  
Thrill through my soul with their delicious smart,  
    And fly abroad from me new-winged with words  
So bright and beautiful and swift to soar  
That all must love them now and evermore.

I sing, I sing, rejoicing in the singing,  
    And men all love me for my songs so sweet,  
Even as they love the rapturous lark upspringing  
    And singing loud his joy the sun to greet ;  
O happiest lot, to win all love and blessing  
For that whose own delight is past expressing !

Are men in truth not joyous strong and whole,  
But lofty strains thro' broken lyres expressed?  
My frame is all attuned to my soul,  
My limbs are glad to do my mind's behest;  
To wander through the wide realm many a day  
As free as thoughts that wander every way:

To climb the mountain brow thro' moonlit gloom,  
With vigorous breathing of its lonely air,  
And watch the tranced dawn from out her tomb  
To perfect resurrection waking there:  
To revel through the storm when fire and rain  
And thunder make a man all heart and brain:

To pierce the inmost heart of solemn woods,  
Where our great Mother coucheth grand and  
dim,  
And baring her full breast in solitudes,  
Suckles each child as if she had but him,  
With that same milk magnificent and bold  
Whence Gods and Titans drew their strength of old;

To plunge away from earth on lonely shores  
And breast the green sea-surges foaming strong,  
Free as an eagle when it sways and soars  
The billows of the tempest-sea among;  
To sail alone the deep, past rocks and caves,  
From isle to isle upon the heaving waves:

To row adown great rivers from their rills,  
    Gliding thro' dawn and eve and noon and night,  
Winding between the patient woods and hills,  
    The broad green meadows, fields and gardens  
        bright ;

Past homesteads each sole-sacred as a star  
Gleaming thro' clustered foliage near and far ;

Past peaceful hamlets loosely gathered round  
    Their spires still pointing from the graves to God ;—  
Past rich and mighty cities far-renowned,  
    So overcharged with life the soul is awed  
To think but of such massed intensity ;  
And so into the earth-surrounding sea.

How the rich days of life and joy and light,  
    The unregretful, unforeboding days,  
Usher me softly into solemn night ;  
    Then sleep her spell divine upon me lays,  
And I am tranced and fed with perfect rest,  
Or wander far through dreamland, fancy-blest.

Then, when the night's dusk curtains are withdrawn,  
    And sleep dissolves her spell of mysteries,  
With what eternal freshness each new dawn  
    Greets me with fair and golden promises !  
While born anew and young with day's new birth  
I hear the lark out-trill my infinite mirth.

So rich and sweet is Life. And what is death?  
The tranquil slumbers dear and strange and boon  
That feed at whiles our waking being's breath;  
The solemn midnight of this glorious noon,  
With countless distant stars, and each a sun,  
Revealed harmonious with our daily one.

1857 : 1859.

## THE LORD OF THE CASTLE OF INDOLENCE

NOR did we lack our own right royal king,  
The glory of our peaceful realm and race.  
By no long years of restless travelling,  
By no fierce wars or intrigues bland and base,  
Did he attain his superlofty place ;  
But one fair day he lounging to the throne  
Reclined thereon with such possessing grace  
That all could see it was in sooth his own,  
That it for him was fit and he for it alone.

He there reclined as lilies on a river,  
All cool in sunfire, float in buoyant rest ;  
He stirred as flowers that in the sweet south quiver ;  
He moved as swans move on a lake's calm breast,  
Or clouds slow gliding in the golden west ;  
He thought as birds may think when 'mid the trees  
Their joy showers music o'er the brood-filled nest ;  
He swayed us all with ever placid ease  
As sways the thronèd moon her world-wide wan-  
dering seas.



Look, as within some fair and princely hall  
 The marble statue of a god may rest,  
 Admired in silent reverence by all ;  
 Soothing the weary brain and anguished breast,  
 By life's sore burthens all-too-much oppressed,  
 With visions of tranquillity supreme ;  
 So, self-sufficing, grand and bland and blest,  
 He dwelt enthroned, and whoso gazed did seem  
 Endowed with death-calm life in long unwistful  
 dream.

While others fumed and schemed and toiled in  
 vain

To mould the world according to their mood,  
 He did by might of perfect faith refrain  
 From any part in such disturbance rude.  
 The world, he said, indeed is very good,  
 Its Maker surely wiser far than we ;  
 Feed soul and flesh upon its bounteous food,  
 Nor fret because of ill ; All-good is He,  
 And worketh not in years but in Eternity.

How men will strain to row against the tide,  
 Which yet must sweep them down in its career !  
 Or if some win their way and crown their pride,  
 What do they win ? the desert wild and drear,  
 The savage rocks, the icy wastes austere,

Wherefrom the river's turbid rills downflow :

But he upon the waters broad and clear,  
In harmony with all the winds that blow,  
'Mid cities, fields and farms, went drifting to  
and fro.

The king with constant heed must rule his realm,

The soldier faint and starve in marches long,

The sailor guide with sleepless care his helm,

The poet from sick languors soar in song :

But he alone amidst the troubled throng  
In restful ease diffused beneficence ;

Most like a mid-year noontide rich and strong,  
That fills the earth with fruitful life intense,  
And yet doth trance it all in sweetest indolence.

When summer reigns the joyous leaves and flowers

Steal imperceptibly upon the tree ;

So stole upon him all his bounteous hours,

So passive to their influence seemed he,

So clothed they him with joy and majesty ;

Basking in ripest summer all his time,

We blessed his shade and sang him songs of  
glee ;

The dew and sunbeams fed his perfect prime,

And rooted broad and deep he broadly towered  
sublime.

Thus could he laugh those great and generous laughs  
 Which made us love ourselves, the world, and him ;  
 And while they rang we felt as one who quaffs  
 Some potent wine-cup dowered to the brim,  
 And straightway all things seem to reel and swim,—  
 Suns, moons, earth, stars sweep through the vast  
 profound,  
 Wrapt in a golden mist-light warm and dim,  
 Rolled in a volume of triumphant sound ;  
 So in that laughter's joy the whole world carolled  
 round.

The sea, the sky, wood, mountain, stream and plain,  
 Our whole fair world did serve him and adorn,  
 Most like some casual robe which he might deign  
 To use when kinglier vesture was not worn.  
 Was all its being by his soul upborne,  
 That it should render homage so complete?  
 The day and night, the even and the morn,  
 Seemed ever circling grateful round his feet,  
 "With Thee, through Thee we live this rich life  
 pure and sweet !"

For while he loved our broad world beautiful,  
 His placid wisdom penetrated it,  
 And found the lovely words but poor and dull  
 Beside the secret splendours they transmit,  
 The heavenly things in earthly symbols writ :

He knew the blood-red sweetness of the vine,  
 Yet did not therefore at the revel sit ;  
 But straining out the very wine of wine,  
 Lived calm and pure and glad in drunkenness  
 divine.

Without an effort the imperial sun  
 With ever ample life of light doth feed  
 The spheres revolving round it every one :  
 So all his heart and soul and thought and deed  
 Flowed freely forth for every brother's need ;  
 He knew no difference between good and ill,  
 But as the sun doth nourish flower and weed  
 With self-same bounty, he too ever still  
 Lived blessing all alike with equal loving will.

The all-bestowing sun is clothed with splendour,  
 The all-supporting sun doth reign supreme ;  
 So must eternal justice ever render  
 Each unsought payment to its last extreme :  
 Thus he most rich in others' joy did seem,  
 And reigned by servitude all-effortless ;  
 For heaven and earth must vanish like a dream  
 Ere such a soul divine can know distress,  
 Whom all the laws of Life conspire to love and  
 bless.

# BERTRAM TO THE MOST NOBLE AND BEAUTIFUL LADY GERALDINE

## I.

LADY! this night for the first time my eyes,  
My bodily eyes, drank in with sateless thirst  
Thy noblest beauty; as when desert skies  
By the full moon late-risen are immerst  
In pure and solemn splendour. Not surprise  
But breathless awe filled all my soul when first  
You floated vision-strange before its sight;  
O long-lost Star! O well-known unknown Light!

## II.

Amid the murmurous hum and dusty glare,  
With which those restless throngs confused the  
room,  
I moved and gazed, with little thought or care,  
So that the hours slipped smoothly through Life's loom,  
Weaving gay vesture for an old despair;  
When the unearthly sense of some great doom  
Approaching near possessed me, and I thrilled  
With tremors too mysterious to be stilled.

## III.

Rapt by that revelation from the crowd,  
 My eyes were lifted,—to behold your face !  
 While, like a silver-burning summer-cloud,  
 Slow-soothed by dreamful airs through azure space,  
 You floated past me, glorious, tranquil, proud ;  
 Borne gliding on with such serenest grace  
 By slow sweet music, that it seemed to be  
 Voicing thine own soul's inward harmony.

## IV.

Forthwith I knew Thee, whom I had not sought  
 Since Youth high-hoping found no outward meed,  
 And, ignorant that high hope its own bliss wrought,  
 Left Faith to die, and nursed the bitter weed  
 Which blooms in poisonous gauds of heartless  
 thought.  
 O sole fulfilment of my heart's great need !  
 Vision revealing how and whence it pined !  
 Blessed redeemer of my sinking mind !

## V.

Thy Presence was its own most adequate  
 Proclaimer, full-credentialled, to my soul :  
 An instant, and I recognized my Fate,  
 Yielding with solemn joy to its control.

I have been wandering in this intricate  
 And gloomy maze of Life, without a goal,  
 Baffled and hopeless ; but my future way  
 Lies straight and clear through life and death for aye.

## VI.

And more :—as moonlight up some sombre stream  
 May flow in silence, a refulgent river,  
 Enchanting the dull line with gracious beam  
 Till far back toward its fount outleaps the  
     quiver  
 Of free waves joyous, living in the gleam ;  
 Even so your Apparition did deliver  
 My long-dead years from blank Lethæan night,  
 And all lived forth in your celestial light.

## VII.

All glorious dreams that beautified and blest  
 My fervent youth were realised in Thee ;  
 Young longings, nobler far in their unrest  
 Than later moods of scornful stagnancy,  
 Again could heave and agitate my breast ;  
 My mind, long world-filled, was empowered  
     to see  
 That Life has sacred mysteries unrevealed,  
 And grander trusts than Earth and Time can yield.

## VIII.

And all this Past was thus redeemed from death,  
 Through its pure prescience of Thyself alone ;  
 Shining in splendours of unclouded faith,  
 Breathing in pants of love. Yes, I had known  
 Thee well in hours long faded ; when your breath  
 Thrilled all my frame, and when your dark eyes  
     shone  
 With holy passion and exalted bliss,  
 Throughout my spirit tranced in ecstasies.

## IX.

Yet it was not the eyes, large, solemn, deep—  
 The several features of the noble face ;  
 Nor wealth of hair, flung down in long-curved sweep,  
 Flashing like rippling sunbeams, whose embrace  
 Doth in so warm a glow of beauty steep  
 That harmony severe of stately grace  
 Which moulds thy form ; nor was it that full form  
 In its serene perfection breathing warm :—

## X.

Not in all these can I find all the spell  
 Which thrilled such instant recognition, wild  
 Yet doubtless as an holy oracle,  
 Throughout my being torpid and defiled.



Why should I fear this joyous truth to tell,  
 Which Love has murmured to his last-born  
 child?—

Unaided by the mean of bodily sense,  
 Souls can reciprocate deep influence.

## XI.

O music, flow for ever soft and sweet  
 Through subtler mazes, that in timeless dream  
 I may for ever watch her dove-quick feet  
 Circling in light adown thy shadowy stream,  
 And calm-robed form float, swaying to the beat  
 Of the long languid pulses ; while outgleam  
 Her face and round arms radiant through the whirls,  
 Grand neck, white shoulders, queenly golden curls.

## XII.

Desire, by its own wild intensity,  
 Was baffled,—I stood trembling, panting, pale ;  
 And every eager step approaching Thee  
 Sank back : how spirits nearing Heaven must  
 quail !  
 Till some strong inspiration carried me,  
 Half-dumb, to gasp my pleading,—and prevail ;  
 To sue, and stand dance-ready at thy side,  
 Intoxicate with love and bliss and pride.

## XIII.

Oh, glory of the dance sublimed to this !

Oh pure white arm electric that embraced  
Ethereal-lightly my unbounded bliss !

Oh, let me die on but another taste  
Of that warm breath ambrosial, and the kiss  
Of those whirl-wanton ringlets ; interlaced,  
Quick frame with frame borne on ; my lips the while  
Within a neck-bend of that heavenly smile !

## XIV.

Did music measure that delirious dancing ?

I heard it not ; I know not what strange sway  
Kept us among those spectral figures, glancing  
As its poor harmonies might rule their way.

I was o'erfilled with music more entrancing,

But wild, how wild ! I could have fled astray,  
Footing the buoyant æther's moonlight sea,  
For ever and for ever linked with Thee.

## XV.

Most pure and beautiful ! what stayed my lips,

When parched with thirsting near such ænomel,  
From clinging unto thine for bee-like sips ?

From pasturing o'er thy brow's white asphodel ?

Sealing thine eyes in passion's dear eclipse,  
 With pressure on the full blue-veinèd swell,  
 And thrillings o'er the silken lashes fine,  
 Mid interdraughts of their deep violet wine?

XVI.

Yet, O Belovèd, though thus love-distraught,  
 Blame not my spirit ; for I felt You there  
 So holy-pure, that self-condemning thought  
 Blighted my passionate worship with despair :  
 Half shrank I from each touch, although it brought  
 Such rapture with it as I scarce could bear,  
 As if from harp strings ready tuned above,  
 To vibrate forth seraphic bliss and love.

XVII.

I felt You as a flower, my hand I knew  
 With touch the lightest-tender still must harm ;  
 Or gem so lucenter than morning dew,  
 That my least breath must sully its pure charm :  
 The cold white moon cresting night's cloudless  
     blue  
 Above dark moorland, far from town and farm,  
 Or few wan stars dim-steadfast in dim skies,  
 Are not so dowered with awe-fraught sanctities.

## XVIII.

Ay, while I thought : Could I seize one caress  
 But one grand grape from this full-fruited vine ;  
 Grasp the rich ripeness, press and press and press,  
 Till drunk with its last drain of glorious wine ;  
 Staking the Future's infinite barrenness  
 'Gainst one transcendent moment's bliss divine !—  
 Even then, my wildered spirit knelt subdued  
 Beneath thy pure calm noble maidenhood.

## XIX.

Subdued by Thee,—and yet exalted more !  
 Calmed by perfection of resolve and pride !  
 The future *was* drear-barren as a shore  
 Wave-wasted by an ever wintry tide :  
 But *now* ! Shall he, whose sanest hopes may soar  
 To win the empire's Empress for his bride,  
 Purloin a jewel from her crownèd brow ?  
 Be kingly, heart ! the throne awaits us now.

## XX.

Thou wert the farther from me, as so near ;  
 Veiled awful, at a distance dim and great,  
 In that supernal spiritual sphere  
 To which Love lifts, that he may isolate

The truest lovers from their union here :

Hence their eternal Bridal, consecrate  
By perfect reverence ; for the Loved must be  
An ever-new Delight and Mystery.

XXI.

Did aught of these tempestuous agitations

In irrepressible gust or lightning-burst  
Perturb thy heaven of starry contemplations

In depths of moonlit quietude immerst ?

I long for answer ; but no meditations

Can realise those memories, all disperst  
In such wild seething mists of joy, hope, fear :—  
Oh, that the question now could reach thine ear !

XXII.

But when I saw the end must come indeed,

When laggard pairs were failing from the dance,  
Surely my curbless thoughts found words to  
plead :—

“ Forgive, sweet Maiden !—Time and Circum-  
stance

Are lightning-swift, and I must match their speed.

Believe me, that I speak in heavenly trance  
Diviner truth than souls can reach or prove  
When uninspired by seraph-sighted Love.

## XXIII.

The Vision sways me ; I must speak or die :  
 Life of my life ! I see, I know, I feel ;  
 The inspiration cannot err or lie ;  
 Passion doth its own truth with pure fire seal ;—  
 God from the depths of all Eternity  
 Created us One Soul, in woe or weal,  
 In life and death, in union or apart :  
 Whisper but ‘ Yea,’ assuring my sure heart !

## XXIV.

“ You tremble pallid, with the same new birth  
 Of Love, the pure eternal Seraph-child !  
 Flooding with fulness all our deadly dearth,  
 Is it not strange and fierce and rapture-wild ?  
 I have dim memory that in yon poor earth  
 Where late I grovelled hopeless and defiled  
 A mortal thing called Love with doubt and pain  
 Is reared : scarce one his sole true Bride can gain.

## XXV.

“ But time is very brief :—Shall we away  
 Into the great calm Night besprinkled o’er  
 With silver throbbing stars ? My Dearest, say !  
 And yet, so rich in years is Evermore

That hurry were mean thrift : we well can stay,  
 Who long have stayed, some few brief time-lives  
     more ;  
 Being so certain from this hour sublime  
 Of coming Union, perfect, beyond Time."

## XXVI.

Were such words borne exultant on my breath ?  
 Memory, which cannot oversoar the deep  
 That yawns between two lives in sombre death,  
     Nor even that 'twixt wakefulness and sleep,  
 Brings no sure tidings : yet, unmoved in faith,  
     Though sick with failing from that glorious  
     steep  
 Whence all the Promised Land was seen so clear,  
 I plod Time's desert with more hope than fear.

## XXVII.

Yes, though I now feel faint and spiritless,—  
 For when such fire of rapture burns down low  
 We shivering cower, unmanned by chill distress,  
     Over the embers while the bleak winds blow ;  
 With dismal dread that such rich blessedness  
     Will never more within our cold hearts glow ;  
 Till in the bitter dark we almost deem  
 That vanished glory a delusive dream :—

## XXVIII.

Yet have I even now deep confidence  
 In those great oracles of solemn bliss  
 Uttered so clearly to my spirit's sense  
 By heavenly Love who pure and perfect is ;  
 Yet must I cherish them with reverence  
 Though scornful voices from our world-abyss  
 Proclaim the madness of both Him and them :  
 This staff sustains,—may fruit yet crown its stem !

## XXIX.

Perchance we never more till death shall meet :  
 You dwell on far high places of the earth,  
 'Midst well-befitting pomp ; beneath your feet  
 I labour humbly, not assured from dearth,—  
 The hard-won bread itself most bitter-sweet.  
 Were I your peer in wealth and worldly birth  
 You still might justly scorn my love and me ;  
 Yet none the less must I live loving Thee.

## XXX.

It is my fate ; your soul hath conquered mine ;  
 And I must be your slave and glory in  
 The bondage whether cruel or benign.  
 Still let me cherish hopes even here to win



By strenuous toil the far-off Prize divine ;  
 And feed on visions, not so shadowy-thin,  
 Of gaining You beneath a nobler sun  
 Should I in this life's battle be undone.

## XXXI.

And with my passionate love for evermore  
 Is blended pure and reverent gratitude ;  
 Nor can I this full sacrifice deplore  
 Though You should scorn me whom You have  
     subdued,  
 Or know not what devotion I outpour.  
 Ah, from this timeless night what boundless good  
 Your Presence hath bestowed on me !—no less  
 That I am stung with my unworthiness.

## XXXII.

Dark winter ruled a desert of drear frost ;  
 Spring's breath stole softly o'er its ice and snow ;  
 All life revives which had so long been lost,  
     Trees green, flowers bloom, birds sing, and  
     fountains flow ;  
 The realm is laughing wide from coast to coast.  
 Dear May of its redemption ! while we know  
 It seemed unworthy of thy Spring-love tender,  
 That love yet fits it for full Summer splendour.

## XXXIII.

Henceforth my life shall not unearnest prove ;  
It hath an ardent aim, a glorious goal :  
Numb Faith re-lives ; You from your sphere above  
Have planted and must nourish in my soul  
That priceless blessing, pure and fervent love,  
O'er which no thought of self can have control.  
If with these boons come ever-longing pain,  
It shall be welcomed for the infinite gain.

## XXXIV.

Be pain unnoticed in a doom like this !  
I see eyes gazing on my weary night  
Like cold strange stars from out the world-abyss ;  
They gaze with scorn or pity : but their sight  
Is banished from my inward golden bliss,  
Floating divinely in the noonday light  
Of Thee round whom I circle—O far Sun,  
Through mirk and shine alike the earth's true  
course is run !

*January 1857.*

## AN OLD DREAM

THE maiden lay in a perfect trance,  
As sweet, as sad as Love ;  
Embowered deep from the night's expanse,  
As a forest-nested dove ;  
Through the leaves came never a single glance,  
For the stars were quenched above.

The world seemed doomstruck, almost dead,  
Nor dared to breathe aloud ;  
A wannish mist of grave-light spread  
From the moon within her shroud ;  
No sky,—but the mute woods overhead  
Hung like a thunder-cloud.

In a pure white robe lay the maiden there,  
A shroud or a bridal white ;  
Her pale face set in her long rich hair,  
Golden and dimly bright ;  
Free from joy and woe and care,  
Entranced within the night.

At length that night was rolled away  
With its buried stars and moon ;  
Advanced the pomp of a royal day  
In a dawn of glorious boon ;  
But consciousness the maiden lay  
Till the crowning hour of noon.

And then she opened her large wild eyes  
In the universal glow :  
Their late trance blent with their new surprise,  
They gazed ; and drank in slow  
Grand gleams of the solemn azure skies  
And the clouds of dazzling snow.

The noontide reigned in perfect power,  
Full-sphered with heat and sheen ;  
The soft blue haze of the secret bower  
Was lit with golden green ;  
Feeling their rich life fruit and flower  
Basked languidly serene.

Sumptuous rose-leaves flushing red,  
And lilies white as snow  
Made for her limbs an ample bed,  
Lying still and low ;  
But pansies pillowed her solemn head  
With their deepest purple glow

And the bower's roof and wall and crown  
Was all one mighty vine,  
That linked and clothed the tree-stems brown  
With an endless leafy twine,  
Which the sultry clustered grapes weighed down,  
Heavy with wealth of wine.

Thus richly couched she lay alone,  
Without one cry or start,  
Although her face was set like stone  
Against some cruel smart ;  
Until her anguish found a moan,  
Complaining to her heart—

“Oh, this is sad, sad, sad !” it sighed,  
“Oh, this is a cruel doom !  
What glorious life fills the whole world wide,  
What fruit and flower and bloom !  
Yet none for me—who must abide  
In this ever-lonely tomb.

“The sky is all a-daze with light,  
The air one murmurous chime ;  
The joyous sea sways blue and bright,  
The earth laughs green with prime ;—  
For me no love and no delight  
In this fair world of Time !”

She moaned—and raised a sculptured arm  
To where the great grapes hung ;  
Her cold hand drew them dusk and warm  
To moisten her languid tongue,—  
To kindle some life through her wasted form  
With the summer's rich blood young.

The whole green-woven umbrage bent  
And swayed to her light stress ;  
The sun-steeped grapes to her wan lips leant  
In an unreserved caress ;  
How could she 'plain of famishment  
Amid such grand excess ?

The sunlight's fervent golder wine  
Came streaming through the bower,  
The clouds of the firmamental vine  
Burst in a crimson shower ;  
She loomed in the midst like a maid divine  
Veiled, glorious, by her dower.

Over the roses and lilies white,  
Over the mossy ground,  
The rills of the vine blood revelled in light,  
Dancing around and around ;  
With a multitudinous laughter bright  
And a song of murmurous sound.

But look on her pallid brow and face,  
Look on her white robe fair, —  
There riot hath left what a bloody trace,  
What a ghastly vestige there !  
What a wild weird purple drowns the grace  
Of her shining golden hair !

The blood of the lusty summer prime  
Could pour no life through her,  
The noon of the gorgeous summer time  
No health, no strength confer :  
She sank back cold from the boons sublime  
To the trance that could not stir.

And who had seen her when the grey  
Was fading into gloom,  
Had thought a sculptured lady lay  
Upon a white stone tomb,  
Besprent with blood, to mark for aye  
Some awful tragic doom.

Throughout calm depths of heaven were strewn  
The pure stars throbbing bright,  
The golden lustre of the moon  
Was spreading through the night,  
When next from out that mystic swoon  
Her spirit rose to light.

She woke—" Ah, once I lived, it seems,  
Through ever mournful years ;  
But now I wake from heavenly dreams  
That fill my eyes with tears ;—  
From floating far down Eden-streams  
With a band of glorious feres.

" And all my heart a throbbing gush  
Of life and love and bliss ;  
And all my face a dawn-bright flush  
From some enraptured kiss ;  
And all our Heaven the breathless hush  
Of crowning ecstasies ! "

While thus she murmured soft and low,  
And still half-trancedly,  
What calm bright forms came sinking slow  
Adown the moonlight sea ?  
What strange sweet music 'gan to grow  
Throughout night's mystery ?

In the deep heart of all the wood  
Came down the seraphs bright ;  
Around the maiden's couch they stood,  
All shining with the light  
Of the beauty of pure sanctitude  
Upon her ravished sight.



They clasped her in a dear embrace  
Of high and holy love ;  
Their voices thrilled the lonely place—  
“ Meek sister ! stricken dove !  
Come soar with us, and see the face  
Of Him who reigns above ! ”

So sang they sweet ; and all around  
The music swelled on high  
To an ocean of triumphant sound,  
That mingled gloriously  
With the moonlight, filling up the bound  
Of all the night-wide sky.

As if rapt heavenwards by the might  
Of that harmonious wind,  
The seraph-wings flashed broad and bright  
And left the earth behind ;  
And dim within their fulgent flight  
The maiden's form reclined.

And up the music-moonlight sea  
They floated calm and slow—  
So that it rather seemed to be  
The earth was sinking low  
Than that they soared, so steadfastly  
Ascending they did go.

They bore the maiden, still and dim,  
When first they rose from earth ;  
But ere the splendour and the hymn  
Left all our sphere a dearth,  
A seraph with the seraphim  
She soared in her new birth.

*Friday, September 23, 1859.*

## THE FADELESS BOWER

ATHWART the gloom of haunted years,  
Whose phantoms mock my lonely woe,  
I gaze, and see through glimmering tears  
A Vision of the Long-ago :  
From out the waste verge dim and far  
How purely gleams that single star !

Shine forth, sole star !—The dear old bower  
And I therein alone with Her,  
In that rich summer's crowning hour,  
Whose quiet breathings scarcely stir  
The woof of leaves and tendrils thin  
Through which faint moonlight ripples in.

I have this moment told my love ;  
Kneeling, I clasp her hands in mine :  
She does not speak, she does not move ;  
The silent answer is divine.  
The flood of rapture swells till breath  
Is almost tranced in deathless death.

Had He whom, 'midst the whirlwind's roar,  
That fiery chariot's living light  
Far through the Heaven of Heavens upbore,  
Consuming space with meteor-flight,  
God's glory dazzling on his gaze,—  
Had *he* then breath for prayer or praise?

The bower is very dim and still ;  
But clustering in the copses near  
Sweet nightingales impassioned thrill  
The night with utterance full and clear  
Of love and love's harmonious jars,  
As glorious as the shining stars.

My lips still lie upon her hand,  
Quivering and faint beyond the kiss ;  
The heavens before my soul expand  
Athrob with dazzling light and bliss ;  
He in his fiery car sublime  
Soared not more swiftly out of Time.

Behold her as she standeth there,  
Breathless, with fixed awe-shadowed eyes  
Beneath her moon-touched golden hair !  
Her spirit's pure humilities  
Are trembling, half would disavow  
The crown I bring to crown her brow.

Unworthy crown ; and yet her life  
Was set on gaining it alone :  
And now in triumph without strife  
Led upward to the queenly throne,  
She falters from the sceptre's weight,  
While flushed with high-wrought pride elate.

The simple folds of white invest  
Her noble form, as purest snow  
Some far and lovely mountain-crest  
Faint-flushed with all the dawn's first glow ;  
Alone, resplendent, lifted high  
Into the clear vast breathless sky.

The bower is hushed and still as death ;  
The moonlight melting through its gloom  
Is mingled with the languid breath  
Of roses steeped in liquid bloom,  
That bare their inmost hearts this night  
To drink in deep the dew and light.

So Thou, my Rose, my perfect Queen  
Of Beauty, float and breathe, nor move,  
In this enchanted air serene,  
Unfolding all thy heart to love ;  
Drink in this dew of heavenly wine,  
This light which is a soul divine.

The Vision fades . . . ah, woe, woe, woe !—

While dreamed that summer's sun-tranced hours  
The ghastly Hand was creeping slow  
Through all their maze of leaves and flowers,  
And tore my Rose off when her breath  
Was sweetest : O remorseless Death !—

Could that one hour have been drawn out  
Until the end of Time's whole range !  
We rapt away, so sphered about,  
And made eternal, free from change ;  
In heart and mind, in soul and frame  
Preserved for evermore the same !

The life of that great town afar  
Would breathe its murmur vast and dim,  
With all the multitudinous jar  
Sublimed into a solemn hymn,  
Mysterious, soothing, evermore,  
As heaven may hear our harsh Life-roar :

The overtrailing passion-flower  
Gaze ever on the starry sky  
With all its constellated bower  
Of large and starlike blooms, which lie  
Amidst their golden fruit beset  
With leaves and tendrils dark-dew-wet :

And I for ever kneel there still,  
With lifted eyes whose yearning sight  
Could never drink its perfect fill  
From those dear eyes of love and light,  
In which to me thy thoughts shine clear  
As yon high stars in yon blue sphere :

Entranced above the worded Yes,  
All flushed and pale with rapturous shame,  
In that dim moonlit quietness  
You stand for evermore the same,  
Fairer than heaven, the Queen who now  
Is trembling as I crown her brow.

Some ardent Seraph from above,  
Some Angel ever growing young,  
Would find this Eden of our love,  
Sequestered all the worlds among ;  
With silent pinions gliding bright  
Into our calm enchanted night.

And, ushered by the chant divine  
Of yonder deathless nightingales,  
Through all the tree-shades reach our shrine ;  
And softly drawing back the veils  
Of foliage let some fuller stream  
Of moonlight bathe thy beauty's dream.

And gazing long, until his form  
Might seem as fixed in trance as we,  
Serenely perfect breathing warm,  
Would sigh a sigh of mystery,  
Half vague regrets, half longings sweet ;  
Then slow with lingering plumes retreat :

Murmuring, " It is a goddess born,  
But left with mortals from her birth,  
None knew that she was thus forlorn ;  
Till this one youth of all the earth,  
Inspired to see her as divine,  
Knelt down in reverence at her shrine.

" Her native instincts roused to life  
Leap up to claim the worship due,  
Are breaking with imperial strife  
The bonds of earthly custom through ;  
Yet still remains some sweet half-fear  
At entrance to the unknown sphere.

" But, oh, what glory, triumph, bliss,  
The sudden revelation wrought !  
What power had that young mortal's kiss  
To thrill her thus beyond all thought ?  
She shares with him the Heavenly throne  
Which he hath made indeed her own.



“ And hence while every other earth  
Rolls circling through the vast abyss  
With interchange of death and birth,  
And night and day, and woe and bliss,  
One sphere is kept for these alway  
Above all growth and all decay.

“ And here she blooms, a budded rose,  
Whose crimson fire of life new-lit  
Is ever fervent to uncloset  
The many-petalled wealth of it,  
Embalmed from reaching to that prime  
Which fades so soon in sultry Time.

“ New dawn, far fairer than the noon ;  
Hope, kinglier than thy crowning day ;  
Young spring’s green promise fresh and boon,  
No wealthiest summer’s fruit can pay ;  
Dreamland, so rich beyond life’s bounds ;  
Silence, more sweet than all sweet sounds !

“ While he who once was mean and poor  
Is climbing strenuous toward the throne,  
He breathes a loftier joy be sure  
Than when the prize is made his own,  
When reft of hope and valiant strife  
He paces lordly-level life.

“O happy bud, for ever young,  
For ever just about to blow !  
O happy love, upon whose tongue  
The Yes doth ever trembling grow !  
O happiest Twain, whose deathless bower  
Embalms you in life’s crowning hour !” . . .

The Seraph-murmurs die out low,  
As fades the Vision, fades the Bower.  
The bower *has* faded long ago ;  
The roses and the passion-flower  
Have rotted in the sodden mould ;  
The new place quite forgets the old.

Ah, Alice, if I dream and dream,  
What else is left me in this life ?  
New faces all about me teem,  
New hopes and woes and loves are rife :  
I overlived my own self, Dear,  
In lingering when you left me here.

And so my heart must soar away  
To where alone its treasure is :  
Despite my dream that we should stay  
Entranced in unfulfilling bliss,  
What fiery longings burn my breast  
To reach, to gain, to be possessed !

Then fade, dim dream ! and Sorrow, cease !

While I can trust, where'er you be,  
That you are waiting my release

To live out to its depth with me,  
In bowers or dens through noble spheres  
The love suspended all these years.

1858.

## SUGGESTED

BY

MATTHEW ARNOLD'S

"STANZAS FROM THE GRANDE CHARTREUSE."

THAT one long dirge-moan sad and deep,  
    Low, muffled by the solemn stress  
Of such emotion as doth steep  
    The soul in brooding quietness,  
Befits our anguished time too well,  
Whose Life-march is a funeral knell.

Dirge for a mighty Creed outworn—  
    Its spirit fading from the earth,  
Its mouldering body left forlorn :  
    Weak idol ! feeding scornful mirth  
In shallow hearts ; divine no more  
Save to some ignorant pagan poor ;

And some who know how by Its light  
    The past world well did walk and live,  
And feel It even now more bright  
    Than any lamp mere men can give ;  
So cling to It with yearning faith,  
Yet own It almost quenched in death :

While many who win wealth and power  
 And honours serving at Its shrine,  
 Rather than lose' their worldly dower  
 Proclaim their dead thing "Life divine ;"  
 And sacrifice to coward lust  
 Their own souls' truth, a people's trust.

And will none mourn the mighty Dead,—  
 Pillar of heavenly fire and cloud,  
 Which through this life's wild desert led  
 For whole millenniums each grand crowd  
 Of sages, bards, saints, heroes, all  
 Whose names we glory to recall ?

None mourn Him, dead, with deep-moved soul,  
 Whom, living, all our sires adored ?  
 None feel the heavy darkness roll  
 Stifling about us, when the Lord  
 Leaves us to walk by our own light,  
 That one pale speck in boundless Night ?—

That earthly lamp when sun and star,  
 When all the heavenly lights are lost :  
 Does it shed radiance round afar ?  
 Our pathway is by deep gulfs cross'd :  
 It fathoms none. We lift it high :  
 It casts not one beam on the sky.

If He thus died as no more fit  
 To lead the modern march of thought,  
 Supreme,—commanding, guiding it,  
 With noblest love and wisdom fraught ;  
 He was at least Divine ; and none  
 Of human souls can lead it on.

We pine in our dark living tomb,  
 Waiting the God-illuminated One  
 Who, only, can disperse the gloom ;  
 Completing what the Dead begun,  
 Or farther leading us some space  
 Toward our eternal resting-place.

But Israel wanders shepherdless,  
 Or gloom-involved unmoving lies,  
 And in despair's stark sinfulness  
 Reviles the promised Paradise  
 It cannot reach—Father divine !  
 Let us not long thus hopeless pine.

Still the deep dirge-notes long and low  
 Breathe forth strange anguish to recall—  
 Could we forget—our direst woe :  
 A proud strong Age fast losing all  
 Earth has of heaven ; bereft of faith ;  
 And living in Eternal Death.

And loudly boastful of such life :  
     Blinded by our material might,  
 Absorbed in frantic worldly strife,  
     Unconscious of the utter Night  
 Whose palpable and monstrous gloom  
 Is gathering for our spirits' tomb.

We feel as gods in our own hearts ;  
     Seeming to conquer Time and Space ;  
 Wealth gorging our imperial marts ;  
     Earth pregnant, from the fierce embrace  
 Our matter-lusting spirits press,  
 With unexampled fruitfulness.

God, answering well our worldly prayer,  
     Our hearts' chief prayer through all the hours  
 Of selfish joy and sordid care,  
     Comes down to us in golden showers :  
 God turns to Mammon at our cry ;  
 Our souls wealth-crushed, dross-stifled lie.

Those few, how rich ! while this great mass,  
     Myriads with equal greed for gold,  
 Sink in such want and woe, alas !  
     As never can on earth be told :  
 These starve, and those yet wealthier rise ;  
 Meanwhile in both the spirit dies.

Hear now the thrilling dirge-notes peal  
 The anguished cry in thunder rolls :—  
 The few yet left who think and feel,  
 Who yearn with strenuous soaring souls  
 For more than earth or time can grant ;  
 Where, where shall they appease their want ?

Black disbelief, substantial doubt  
 Wreathe—blent into one louring cloud  
 Through which Heaven's light can scarce shine  
 out—  
 Round all the Faiths : all in such shroud  
 Fade ghostlike to th' entombing Past :  
 Our Heaven is wildly overcast.

Yet each Creed, senile, sick, half-dead,  
 With bitter spite and doting rage  
 Reviles all others. Whoso, led  
 By thirst of love to pilgrimage,  
 Seeks now old God-given Wells of Life,  
 Finds drought-dry centres of vain strife ;

And turns away in blank despair,  
 To scoff or weep as fits his mood.  
 O God in Heaven, hear our prayer !  
 We know Thou art, Allwise, Allgood,  
 Yet sink in godless misery :  
 Oh, teach us how to worship Thee !



## PART II.

The great Form lies there nerveless still:

But as we fix our longing gaze  
It grows in grandest beauty, till  
We worship in entranced amaze ;  
Such holy love and wisdom seem  
To be there rapt in heavenly dream.

Oh, if He may once more awake !

Oh, if it be not death, but sleep !—  
And He from that dread slumber break  
Refreshed and strong, full-powered to sweep  
The darkness from our path again ;  
Once more the Guiding Star of men !

Yet—though it be death—view It well.

The brow, how nobly high and broad !  
What love on those shut lips might well !  
This Form sublimely templed God :  
And, if not perfect, is a shrine  
Approaching well the most Divine.

Do not turn hastily away

From mighty death to petty life ;  
Gaze in deep reverence on the clay  
With such a soul's expression rife :  
Read here, read long, the features worn  
By One incarnate Heavenly-born.

So may we hope to recognise  
 That Greater One who shall succeed  
 This death-bound Monarch, who now lies  
 In mute appealing for our need :  
 God cannot long desert His earth ;  
 In the Old's death the New has birth.

What say we?—we know well this truth,  
 There is no death for the Divine ;  
 Which lives in ever-perfect youth :  
 The Form alone—its earthly shrine—  
 Is subject to earth's mortal sway ;  
 Sickens, and dies, and rots away.

Thus each Form in its turn expires,  
 No more with all revealed Truth rife,—  
 Which even at that time inspires  
 Some new and nobler form with life,  
 Grandeur and vaster to express  
 More of Its infinite heavenliness.

Thus has it been since Time's first birth,  
 Thus must it be for evermore :  
 Still lie, moth-eaten, on the earth  
 Old garments which this Spirit wore ;  
 Till, soiled and rent, they were off-thrown,  
 And wider-flowing robes put on.

They could not grow with His great growth,  
 Pauseless though slow throughout the years ;  
 And vainly worshippers—so loath  
 To leave what lengthened use endears—  
 May still the empty robes adore ;  
 Their virtue was from Him who wore.

Let none say the Divine is dead,  
 Although this Form be soul-less quite :  
 The Heavenly Sun doth ever shed  
 His life-giving heat, His saving light ;  
 Never our earth doth lose His ray,  
 Save when she turns herself away.

Let none say the Divine is dumb,  
 Although His voice no more we hear :  
 It is that we are deaf become.  
 For measured to each eye and ear  
 His glory shines, His voice outspeaks ;  
 To each He gives the most it seeks.

Our spirits may for ever grow ;  
 And He will fill them as before,  
 And still their measure overflow  
 With His unlessered infinite More :  
 He gives us all we can receive ;  
 He teaches all we can believe.

The pure can see Him perfect-pure ;  
 The strong feel Him, Omnipotence ;  
 The wise, All-wise ; He is obscure  
 But to the gross and earth-bound sense :  
 Alas for us with blinded sight  
 Who dare to cry, There is no light !

## PART III.

Nay, ask us not to rise and leave  
 Him from whom power and life seem gone ;  
 Say not that it is weak to grieve ;  
 Duty does *not, now*, urge us on :  
 In vain *ye* urge ; too well we know  
 We cannot by our own strength go.

Vainly ye choose you Saviours now  
 Of men,—however good and wise  
 Be those your mean faith would endow  
 With power to which no man can rise :  
 No best men living lure our faith  
 From the Divine though veiled in death.

Vainly ye wander every way  
 Throughout the earth in search of Heaven,  
 Changing your useless path each day  
 With each new transient impulse given  
 By human guides, who still agree  
 In naught but fallibility.

We should know better from the lore  
 Of worldly wisdom—keen mistrust—  
 On which our minds so love to pore ;  
 Nor leave for any child of dust  
 This One Divine : to Him adhere  
 Till the diviner One appear.

My brothers, let us own the truth,  
 Bitter and mournful though it be,—  
 That we, who spent our dreary youth  
 In foul and sensual slavery,  
 Are all too slavish, too unmanned,  
 For Conquerors of the Promised Land.

In unprogressive wanderings  
 We plod the desert to and fro ;  
 And fiery serpents' mortal stings,  
 Earthquake and sword and weary woe  
 And pestilence deal fearful death  
 Amongst us for our want of faith.

Far-scattered o'er the Waste forlorn  
 Our bones shall whiten through the years,  
 And startle pilgrims yet unborn ;  
 Our noblest captains, priests and seers,  
 Dark death shall one by one remove,  
 For lack of wisdom, faith, or love.

Yet be we patient, meek and pure,  
 Unselfishly resigned to God's  
 Mysterious judgments ; and endure  
 Our sore scarce-intermitted loads  
 Of grief and weary pain, imbued  
 With sternly passive fortitude :

And pray that those who shall succeed  
 Prove worthy of a happier life  
 Than we dare ask for as our meed ;  
 That they a constant noble strife  
 Victorious against Ill may wage,  
 And gain the glorious heritage.

Cease now to cry and storm, and move,  
 By such tumultuous toil opprest  
 As, without guidance, vain must prove :  
 When God keeps still can ye not rest ?  
 When He sends night so dark and deep,  
 Why shrink from renovating sleep ?

Sleep, to His care resigned, a space ;  
 That when He rises in His might  
 To lead our hosts from this dire place,  
 We may have strength and heart to fight  
 All evils that would bar our way,  
 And march unfaltering all the day.

Yes, let us stay in loving grief,  
 Which patient hope and trust yet cheer,  
 Silent beside our silent Chief,  
 Till His Successor shall appear ;  
 Till death's veil fall from off His face,  
 Or One anointed take His place.

Nay,—our adoring love should have  
 More faith than to believe that He,  
 Before Another comes to save,  
 Can leave us in blind misery  
 Without a Guide : God never can  
 So utterly depart from man.

We will move onward !—let us trust  
 That there is life and saving power  
 In this dear Form which seems but dust.  
 Arise, arise ! though darkness lower,  
 Earnest, bold-hearted, cease to mourn ;  
 It shall before our hosts be borne.

Triumphantly He ever led  
 Our faithful armies while alive ;  
 What though His form be cold and dead,  
 His Spirit doth that death survive :  
 We conquer by that Soul this Form  
 Enshrined, not ill, while free and warm.

Thus men have honoured fellow men,  
 Who dying left a lofty fame ;  
 And won most glorious victories then  
 By inspiration of a Name :  
 If in men's names such life abode,  
 Shall there not in *His*,—Son of God.

A dawn-light creeps throughout the gloom,  
 Sullenly sinks the storm of wrath ;  
 Life blossoms in our desert tomb ;  
 Mysteriously we find a path  
 Which leadeth on to Paradise.  
 Thus to our love's faith He replies !

But, while the dirge still rolls away  
 In passionate thunders wildly blent  
 With mournful moanings, let us pray—  
 Still on our Holy War intent—  
 "O God, revive the seeming Dead ;  
 Or send Another in His stead !

"The wintry midnight drear is past,  
 But still the dawn gleams grey and cold ;  
 Dread phantoms haunt each restless blast,  
 Our stumblings still are manifold :  
 Oh, let Thy cloudless Sun rise soon,  
 And flood us with His summer noon !"



# FOUR POINTS IN A LIFE

## I.

### LOVE'S DAWN.

STILL thine eyes haunt me ; in the darkness now,  
The dreamtime, the hushed stillness of the night,  
I see them shining, pure and earnest light ;  
And here, all lonely, may I now avow  
The thrill with which I ever meet their glance ?  
At first they gazed a calm abstracted gaze,  
The while thy soul was floating through some maze  
Of beautiful divinely-peopled trance ;  
But now I shrink from them in shame and fear,  
For they are gathering all their beams of light  
Into an arrow, keen, intense, and bright,  
Swerveless and star-like from its deep blue sphere,  
Piercing the cavernous darkness of my soul,  
Burning its foul recesses into view ;  
Transfixing with sharp agony through and through  
Whatever is not brave, and clean, and whole.  
And yet I will not shrink, although thou piercest  
Into the inmost depth of all my being :

I will not shrink, although thou now art seeing  
 My heart's caged lusts the wildest and the fiercest ;  
 The cynic thoughts that fret my homeless mind,  
 My unbelief, my selfishness, my weakness,  
 My dismal lack of charity and meekness ;  
 For, amidst all the evil, thou wilt find  
 Pervading, cleansing, and transmuting me,  
 A fervent and most holy love for Thee.

1852.

## II.

## MARRIAGE.

COME to me, oh, come to me !  
 Time is long since we were parted ;  
 I am sad and weary-hearted,  
     Foiled and almost overthrown,  
     Fighting with the world alone ;  
     What am I when thou art gone ?  
         Come, darling, soon !

Come to me, oh, come to me !  
 Let my failing head find rest, Love,  
 On thy pure and tender breast, Love ;  
     Calm my overwearied brain,  
     Soothe away my heart's chill pain,  
     Bring me hope and strength again ;  
         Come, darling, soon !

Come to me, oh, come to me !  
Evermore the memory lingers,  
How your gentle "flower-soft" fingers,  
With a touch, when I lay ill,  
Through my fevered frame would thrill  
Cool rich life, divinely still :  
Come, darling, soon !

Come to me, oh, come to me !  
Dearest heart of love and meekness,  
Is not this unmanly weakness ?  
But with thee such pure sweet calm  
Heals my wounds with heavenly balm,  
I, fighting, feel my spear a palm :  
Come, darling, soon !

Come to me, oh, come to me !  
Though its perils gloomed more fearful  
I could fight undaunted, cheerful,  
This stern agony, called Life,  
Were the pauses of the strife  
Blest by thee, my noble wife :  
Come, darling, soon !

Come to me, oh, come to me !  
Strength, and hope, and faith are waning  
With this fierce and pauseless straining :

Ere my soul be conquered quite,  
Ere I fail from Truth and Right,  
Come, my Life, my Joy, my Light,  
Come, Darling, soon!

1857.

## III.

## PARTING.

WEEP not, dearest, weep not so ;  
Soon again we two shall meet  
Who now part in deadly woe :  
After pain shall bliss be sweet.

Few more years of numb despair  
Must we wander far apart  
Through the desert dead and bare ;  
Love is courage in the heart.

Few more years of bitter moan  
O'er the rugged mountain height,  
Must we toil on, each alone ;  
Love can make all burthens light.

Few more years of stricken woe,  
Erring on an alien shore,  
Lone and friendless each must go :  
We will love then more and more.

Few short hours of doubt and dread,  
 Trembling on the brink of Night,  
 Spectre-haunted, each must tread :  
 Love can burn all darkness bright.

All the long lone years must die ;  
 Then shall we together come,  
 Where beneath a calm bright sky,  
 Bright waves bear us to our home.

Weep not, Dearest, weep not so ;  
 Soon again we two *must* meet  
 Where the calm deep waters flow,  
 Soothing surely care and woe,  
 With their mystic murmur sweet.

1854.

#### IV.

#### AT DEATH'S DOOR.

Is this the second childhood's feeble sadness ?  
 My eyes are dim now and my hair is white ;  
 Yet never did the sunshine give more gladness,  
 Never young Spring burst forth in green delight  
 More freshly ; never was the earth more fair,  
 Never more rapture in the common air.

Still, as I near great Death, it seems his portal  
Glides gently backward, that I may gaze through  
And catch far glories of the realm immortal ;  
The world becomes transparent to my view,  
Diviner Heavens expand beyond the skies ;  
The stars grow thoughtful with eternal eyes.

How all the grass and every flower seem yearning  
To hint more clearly some high loveliness,  
Whose mystic soul within their forms is burning ;  
How strives the sea for ever to express,  
With infinite heavings, murmurings manifold,  
Some secret grandeur that will not be told.

The life of day is lulled to dreamful musing,  
And true life waketh in the world of dream ;  
While with the Present, strangely interfusing,  
The Future and the Past together stream,  
As if the long-drawn waves of Time should be  
Settling and mingling in Eternity.

With every golden dawn awakened lightly,  
It seems I must have slept through Death's calm  
night ;  
For lo !—how purely, silently, and brightly,  
The Heavens unfold their gates before my sight ;  
The tranced sea of crystal spreadeth slowly,  
The burning Throne shines out with splendours holy.

Whereon I look to see Thee come, swift greeting,  
 From where thou waitest for my lingering feet ;  
 Assured beyond impatience for the meeting,  
 Crowned with triumphant love and faith complete :  
 I look in vain as yet ; but any hour,  
 So summer-rich, may make the bud a flower.

How well, my Love, the thoughtful Heavens  
 endeavour  
 To make this world and life and time all bear  
 Dream-lightly on the soul, ere it for ever  
 Be parted from them !—Did I once despair  
 Through years of lonely anguish unassuaged ?  
 This calm can scarce believe that storms have raged.

Here is the blessing : I now muse enchanted  
 In this sweet dawn-like sunset ; night comes then  
 Of restful sleep by gracious visions haunted ;  
 So with new morning I shall rise again,  
 Full of young life, and find my Love for aye—  
 My Love whom I have lost this long sad day.

# MATER TENEBRARUM

## I.

IN the endless nights, from my bed, where sleepless  
in anguish I lie,  
I startle the stillness and gloom with a bitter and  
strong cry :  
O Love ! O Belovèd long lost ! come down from  
thy Heaven above,  
For my heart is wasting and dying in uttermost  
famine for love !  
Come down for a moment ! oh, come ! Come  
serious and mild  
And pale, as thou wert on this earth, thou adorable  
Child !  
Or come as thou art, with thy sanctitude, triumph  
and bliss,  
For a garment of glory about thee ; and give me  
one kiss,  
One tender and pitying look of thy tenderest  
eyes,  
One word of solemn assurance and truth that the  
soul with its love never dies !



No hope in this worn-out world, no hope beyond  
the tomb ;

No living and loving God, but blind and stony  
Doom.

Anguish and grief and sin, terror, disease and  
despair :

Why throw not off this life, this garment of torture  
I wear,

And go down to sleep in the grave in everlasting  
rest ?

What keeps me yet in this life, what spark in my  
frozen breast ?

A fire of dread, a light of hope, kindled, O Love,  
by thee ;

For thy pure and gentle and beautiful soul, it must  
immortal be.

# A REAL VISION OF SIN

[At the head of the original MS. is the following remark, by the author, in pencil :—" Written in disgust at Tennyson's, which is very pretty and clever and silly and truthless."]

LIKE a soaking blanket overhead  
Spongy and lax the sky was spread,  
Opaque as the eye of a fish long dead.

Like trees in a drawing gummed together  
Some trees stood dim in the drizzling weather ;  
Sweating mere blood-flowers gloomed the heather.

Like a festering gash left gaping wide  
That foul canal, long swooned from tide,  
The marshy moorland did divide.

In a slushy hollow near its bank,  
Where noisome weeds grew thick and dank,  
And the very soil like an old corpse stank,

They cowered together, the man and crone,  
Two old bags of carious bone ;  
They and a mangy cur alone :

Ragged, haggard, filthy, both ;  
Viewing each the other loath ;  
Growling now and then an oath.

She at length with a spasm raised  
Her strong grey eyes, still strong tho' glazed ;  
And thus her meditations phrased :

"No mite left of all our treasure ;  
Sin itself has no more pleasure :  
Drained out, drained out our full measure !"

He quavered back : "It does seem so :  
The sun 'e died out long ago ;  
The earth and the sky are a-rottin' slow."

She writhed her thick brows, dirty grey :  
"Then take at once my easy way  
Of swamping misery from our clay.

"No trembling, dear red-rat-eyes ! Come !  
We slip together through that green scum,  
And then with the world here rot on dumb."

He sat still, nipping spiteful blows  
On the snarling cur's amorphous nose ;  
Relishing faintly her propose.

" Well *you* look lovely, so you do,  
To call *me* names : a-drowndin' you  
Would go to spoil this pleasant view !

" This 'ere damned life is bad enough ;  
But, say we smother in that stuff,  
Our next life's only worse, you muff ! "

The woman thereto coldly sneered :  
" Of course, as usual all afeared,  
Old slaver-dewy stubble-beard.

" Idiot and coward ! hell-flames feed  
On certain fuel ; but, indeed,  
A used-up soul won't sate their greed.

" When Earth once gets us cold and stark  
She'll keep us safely in the dark :  
No fear of rousing with the lark !

" Full long ago in grim despair,  
She growled, *How those two witch-fires flare !*  
*They'll get no second chance I swear !*"

She laught this truth out 'gainst the man ;  
Who shuffling, ill at ease, began :  
“ You can be devilish sore, you can.

“ Suppose you're right ; this life's a one  
That's cursèd bad, but better than none. . . .  
I wish they'd light another Sun.

“ We used to spree and we don't spree now ;  
A screw is loose in the world allow,  
*We* didn't make it, anyhow.

“ Say Life's hard-up, No-life's more glum :  
Just think—a lashing lot of rum,  
And a night with you and a cool old chum ! ”

She fingered a toad from its love-work sweet,  
And flung to the cur with a “ mangy, eat ;  
They say there's poison in the meat ;

“ And so the next time you bite this dear  
He'll die off mad ; for else I fear  
He'd fester for ever and ever here.”

Its loose fangs squashed the nectarous lump ;  
Then it went and crouched on a doddered stump,  
With an evil eye on the Male Sin's hump.

He blinked and shuffled and swore and groaned :  
Rasping the bristly beard she owned,  
She thought drear thoughts until she moaned.

“I see the truth,” with a scornful laugh,  
“I have starved abroad on the swine-fouled draff,  
While sleek at home sucked the fatt’ning calf.

“Too late, too late ! Yet it’s good to see,  
If only damnation, thoroughly ;  
My Life has never met with me.

“And *you*, you never loved me, *you* !  
A heart that never once beat true,  
How could it love ? I loved for two.

“This dirty crumpled rag of a breast  
Was globed with milk once ; I possess  
The means of being grandly blest !

“Did the babe of mine suck luscious sips,  
Soothing the nipple with rose-soft lips  
While her eyes dropped mild in a dear eclipse ?

“A babe !—could I now squeeze out three drops  
Between that poor cur’s ulcerous chaps,  
He’d die as livid as yon tree-tops.

"You know where it rests, that child-dream gone?  
Come, grope in this charming water-lawn,  
Through ooze and slime and filth and spawn :

"Perhaps we shall find a shudderous feel,  
Neither of eft nor toad nor eel ;  
May hear a long long stifled squeal.

"Touch the rotten bones of a murdered brat  
Whose flesh was daint to the water-rat,—  
If it *does* gnaw flesh it would relish that !"

He ventured, "Curse all memory !  
It's more than thirty years"—but she  
Continued fierce unheeding—

"Come, and this loathsome life out-smother,  
No fear that we'll ever have another :  
The rain may beat and the wind may wuther,

"But we shall rot with the rotting soil,  
Safe in sleep from the whole sad coil ;  
Sleep's better than corn and wine and oil.

"Here's a kiss ; now at once !" effused the witch,  
And dragged the wildered male to the ditch,  
And plunged there prone by a bladdery bitch.

Drowned dead, stone dead, and still her grasp  
Clawed *him* : but with a frenzied gasp  
He shuddered off the scranny clasp.

Up the soddened bank in a fury of funk  
He sprawled : "She's awful ! but she's sunk ;  
I daren't die except dead drunk."

He managed at length the hollow to win ;  
And was gulping down with a pang-writhed grin  
The black bottle's last of vitriol gin,

When his gorge was choked by a sudden blight :  
The cur growled mad with venom and fright,  
And its blotches of hair all bristled upright.

Its frenzy burst out in a wolfish yell ;  
It leaped at his throat like an imp of hell ;  
In a spasm of horror the bottle fell :

It griped up his flaccid throat with a force  
That made his terrorment gurgle hoarse,  
While he turned as blue as a cholera-corse.

It haled him into the festering dike ;  
So all sank dead in its clam alike,—  
The Man, the Woman, the virtuous Tyke.



And the dense rain crooned in its sullen flow  
From the sodden sky-stretch drooping low  
To the sodden earth ; and to and fro

Crept a maundering wind too weak to blow ;  
And the dim world murmured dismal woe :  
For the earth and the sky *were* a-rotting slow.

*Friday, March 4, 1859.*

Over the rolling waves of sward  
    We lightly skimmed along ;  
While the larks from the cloud and the azure  
    poured  
    Freely their first full song :

Then leaf-like came a-dropping down,  
    When their joy thro' heaven was told,  
To the short sweet grass, to the gorse half brown,  
    Half lit with shining gold.

And I said or thought : Not Dian queen  
    With her quiver and her bow,  
A statelier form, a purer mien,  
    A lighter step could show.

Till we came to a long lone quiet glen,  
    Much loved of the thoughtful sheep :  
Before the Flood—or, who knows when?—  
    It perhaps was a river deep.

There were the targets ready placed,  
    Right gorgeous to behold ;  
With their red rings, blue rings, white rings  
    graced,  
    Around the central gold.

And there our mighty match we shot,  
Like eager Volunteers.  
Hit we the mark, or hit we not,  
What merry laughs and jeers !

Gaily we tripped along the glen  
Between the targets two,  
With riant races now and then  
For arrows in the dew.

O arch was she with her jest and smile,  
And arch was I, I ween ;  
But the Archer archest all the while  
Was shooting there unseen.

Swift, swift and keen his arrows flew,  
Well aimed at either heart ;  
And pierced the poor things thro' and thro',  
With a strange delicious smart.

Well—when the match was fairly done,  
Who triumphed, she or I ?  
We both had lost, we both had won ;  
It ended in a tie.

For that third Archer, we agreed,  
Alone should judge the case ;  
And thus he solemnly decreed,  
With wisdom in his face—

“ You—maiden of the witching eyes,  
You—happiest of men ;  
Must share the honour and the prize,  
Nor ever strive again.

“ For thus on either I bestow  
The meed that fitteth well—  
*She* is the mistress of the beau,  
*He* bears away the belle.”

*Curragh*, 1860.

## THE DREAMER

SING the old song while the dear child is sleeping,

Sing it most sweetly and tenderly low ;

Not to awake her again to her weeping ;

Let the soft notes through her dream gently flow.

What, though the passionate tears were down-  
streaming

From eye-balls long parched, when she lay down  
to rest :

Poor thing, she now is most tranquilly dreaming ;

Her life is again with His dear presence blest.

See, o'er her wan face what joy brightly flushes ;

Beneath the dark lids how her eyes swell and  
gleam !

The sweet smile is drowned in the glow of love-  
blushes !

Yes ! he companions her now in the dream.

Darling ! her lips murmur softly and slowly,—

What sacred vows and confessions of love ?

Is not this Dream-life most blessed and holy

Less of the earth than of Heaven above ?

No, do not draw down the white lawny curtain :  
The moonlight sleeps still on her hair, on her face;  
Mystical blending of shadow uncertain  
With lustre as holy as Heaven's blessed grace.  
It stirs not her slumber, but chastened and tender—  
Our musical murmur half-thrilling its breast—  
Pervades with a blissful entrancement of splendour  
That dim world of dreams where her soul findeth  
rest.

Sing the old song still with low-voicèd sweetness,  
To harmonise well with her brief dream of bliss,  
Blending therewith to ecstatic completeness :—  
The poor pallid lips, are they trembling a kiss !  
So may the words and the scenes of her vision  
To her tranced spirit more exquisite grow ;  
With beauty and glory and rapture Elysian  
Subtly attuned to our soft music's flow :

And she may, alas, when she wakes with the morrow  
To bitter reality, hopeless and lone,  
Remember far more to sooth anguish and sorrow  
Of the dream and the dream-words of him who  
is gone :

And so, when we sing the old song in her hearing,  
May she with wonder and secret joy find  
The dear words, the bliss of her dream re-appearing  
With the loved music that flows through her mind.

Perhaps she now hears him an old love-lay singing ~~;~~

Does it not thrill in her eager, fixed face?

Or hears the old Church-bells in golden chimes  
ringing

The union that cannot in this world take place.  
But sleep, darling, sleep; oh, dwell long in that  
heaven,

The strange, solemn dream-land so holy and calm,  
Which God hath in mercy to such as thee given;  
Where all stricken hearts may find wound-healing  
balm.

## ROBERT BURNS

HE felt scant need  
Of church or creed,  
He took small share  
In saintly prayer,  
His eyes found food for his love ;  
He could pity poor devils condemned to hell,  
But sadly neglected endeavours to dwell  
With the angels in luck above :  
To save one's precious peculiar soul  
He never could understand is the whole  
Of a mortal's business in life,  
While all about him his human kin  
With loving and hating and virtue and sin  
Reel overmatched in the strife.  
"The heavens for the heavens, and the earth for  
the earth !  
I am a Man—I'll be true to my birth—  
Man in my joys, in my pains."



So fearless, stalwart, erect and free,  
He gave to his fellows right royally  
    His strength, his heart, his brains ;  
For proud and fiery and swift and bold—  
Wine of life from heart of gold,  
The blood of his heathen manhood rolled  
    Full-billowed through his veins.

# THE PURPLE FLOWER OF THE HEATHER

## I.

On the grey lone keep stood the Lady fair,  
With the lonely stream beneath ;  
New-numbered with horror, moaning there,  
Her eye-balls fixed in a death-like stare  
Across the darkening heath.

## II.

They leapt from their boat in the grim grey air,  
They strode on stern and slow ;  
By the wrinkled waters cold and bare,  
Under the great clouds rolling there,  
All ruggedly rimmed with a fierce red glare  
From the stormy sunset low.

## III.

They stood foot to foot on the lone dark heath,  
Eye fixed on eye :  
A pause—and each blade has left its sheath  
To clash and to flash its keen cold death  
Under the turbid sky.

## IV.

Adown the long straight fir-tree aisles  
The long gusts sing and roar ;  
The reeds all sigh through their shivering files  
To the sad stream creeping weary miles  
Across the barren moor.

## V.

The gale sweeps down through southern lands ;  
Some stars peer faint and grey,  
On two stern shadows—weary hands  
Of tireless rage—with sullen brands  
Still urging deadly fray.

## VI.

For they fight on still, though they bleed and gasp,  
With sweep and ward and pierce ;  
And the long glaives quiver in their clasp,  
As tree-boughs quiver in a tempest's grasp  
Because the grasp is fierce.

## VII.

The moon came slowly up the sky  
To see a mournful sight :  
The one the other kneeleth by

To tear his heart forth ere he die—

“Great God hath judged your life’s deep lie!

Confess, now, recreant knight!”

VIII.

Some faint words thrilled the waiting air—

“I speak—to pardon you.

Sealed lips must ope for their own last prayer;

Your outrage now is washed out, fair—

Though with my blood not yours—I swear

Both she and I were true.”

IX.

Slow, slow, the moon moved through the sky

All night above that plain;

Still gazing down with her cold wan eye

On one all wild with agony

Beside another slain.

X.

“His form is cold as the earth beside,

His blood is cold as the dew.

O cursèd, cursèd jealous pride!

O, lost for ever, noblest bride!

O, dear, dear friend, that I had died

Ere death had come to you!”

## XI.

Slow, slow, the moon moved through the sky,  
About that turret's gloom ;  
Staring mad with her lidless eye  
The Lady, who with groan nor sigh,  
But pale and stark and stonily,  
Leant staring for her doom.

1857.

# A WINTER'S NIGHT

## I.

O MOURNFUL, mournful wind !  
Sobbing and moaning over moor and height ;  
Fleeing the dawn, and plunging anguish-blind  
Deeper and deeper into doleful night.

## II.

O Moon, so faint and wan !  
Sinking away from gloomy cloud to cloud,  
Whence sleet and snow are shaken ; and the  
dawn  
Shall find the earth laid out in one blank shroud.

## III.

The noontide breeze may blow  
With lifeful pleasure o'er the throngs of men,  
Freed from their darkest lusts and bitterest woe,  
Earning the bread of healthful labours then.

## IV.

Throned in eternal day  
The Sun may smile—all joy when joys the King ;  
Diffusing light and life and wealth for aye,  
How should he dream to pity anything ?

## V.

But thou—pale Priestess born !  
Driven for ever through the shoreless sea  
Of spectral night ; thy pure heart pierced and torn  
With sight of our worst sin and misery :

## VI.

And thou—O homeless wind !  
Flung forth wild-moaning through night's wilderness,  
Burdened with all worst agonies of our kind,  
To sink far off beneath the fatal stress :

## VII.

Well may you sob and cry,  
Breathing this night our voice of guilt and pain !  
Well may you gaze down sadly, O wan Eye,  
To which our wretched lives this night are plain !

## SIREN'S SONG

REALM of the sea ! Listen to me,  
Rising up softly to sing you to rest ;  
Your queen and your love, your lily, your dove,  
Soothing with music your broad-heaving breast ;  
Guarding your isles from bad spirits' wiles,  
When the weary sun closes his lids in the west.  
What shall I sing you to-night ?  
Listen and listen, the waters all glisten  
A-gaze on the ever-sweet moon :  
She gives you beauty of light,  
I give you the bountiful boon  
Of slumber-sweet singing so lovely and free,  
Delicious for glee.

All the sun-perfect day I dive and I play  
Adown through the azure and soft-yielding  
streams,  
To the golden-green waves and the coralline  
caves  
And the pale purple bowers lit with clear crystal  
gleams ;



Or I float swayed in rest, embraced and caressed  
In the mid-sea's entrancement of noon-languid  
dreams :

Then in the night I may roam,  
Singing so sweetly, and chasing so featly  
The stars all a-dance in the deep ;  
Or, like a beautiful foam,  
Ride up the shore on the sweep  
Of the long-sounding waves, and with wild laughs  
of glee  
Melt back to the sea.

Realm of the sea ! Mighty and free !—

None else can hear now—list to my sigh ;  
With a sweet love and dear do I charm you down  
here,

As the moon with her love from on high ;  
And I reign all alone on my pearlèd throne  
As the moon in her star-gemmed sky :

I ever-sole like the Moon !

This is the sadness that fretteth my gladness—

Oh ! for a lover so dear !

Oh ! for love's bountiful boon !

Ah ! there is no one to hear :

How I would love him, how happy were we,  
My realm of the sea !

# GARIBALDI REVISITING ENGLAND

THIS day all the eyes of our millions  
Are fixed on the south, where the light  
Of the waves of the Channel laughs fearless  
Round the thunder-clouds stored with our might ;  
This day the great heart of the people  
Is throbbing expectant, upstirred  
By a pride and a joy and a sorrow  
The voice of those thunders should word.

For what is this mighty heart glowing ?  
For what do these earnest eyes scan ?  
It glows for a hero and martyr,  
They look for a patriot, a Man ;  
For a hero supreme in the battle,  
A martyr no griefs could subdue,  
A patriot the soul of his country,  
A man to the people all-true :

For him who as grandly defended  
As grandly MAZZINI ruled Rome ;  
For him who gave Sicily, Naples,  
To those who had bartered his home ;

For him who on sad Aspromonte  
 Was pierced by a countryman's ball,—  
*Tu Brute!* this Cæsar worst-wounded  
 In soul yet forgiveth it all.

Oh, let us, we people of England,  
 We millions the worst and the best,  
 Give welcome true, solemn, and thoughtful,  
 Befitting the worth of our guest.  
 All titles and wealth which the monarch  
 Could proffer this man is above ;  
 The people alone can reward him  
 In his own golden coin, loyal love.

Nor let us forget in the shoutings  
 And feasts of the triumph they plan,  
 That he comes not alone in his glory ;  
 The Nation is here in the Man :  
 Enceladus Italy, risen  
 With earthquake, but pausing distrest ;  
 The left arm still brutally fettered,  
 And Peter's rock crushing the breast.

---

Evviva a te, magnanimo  
 Ribelle! A la tua fronte  
 Più sacri lauri crebbero  
 Le selve d' Aspromonte.

Chi vinse te? Deh, cessino  
 I vanti disonesti :  
 Te vinse amor di patria,  
 E nel cader vincesti.

Evviva a te, magnanimo  
 Ribelle e precursore !  
 Il culto a te de' posteri,  
 Con te d' Italia è il cuore !

Io bevo a 'l dì che fausto  
 L' eterna Roma schiuda  
 Non a' Seidni ignobili  
 A i Tigellini a i Giuda,

Si a libertà che vindice  
 Dell' umano pensiero  
 Spezzi la falsa cattedra  
 Del successor di Piero.

Sii maledetto :—e d' odio  
 Con inesauste brame  
 I fratricidi il premano  
 Onde Aspromonte è infame.

Odio di dei Prometeo,  
 Arridi a' figli tuoi :  
 Solcati anche dal fulmine,  
 Pur l' avvenir siam noi.

GIOSUÈ CARDUCCI : *Dopo Aspromonte.*

## WITHERED LEAVES

### I.

LET the roses lie, dear,  
Let them lie ;  
They are all thrown by, dear,  
All thrown by :  
What should they do now but quickly die ?

### II.

Yester morn they flourished  
Fresh and fair ;  
Dew and sunlight nourished,  
Bloomed they there,  
Blushing as their sweetness felt the air.

### III.

Yester eve he tore them  
From the tree ;  
Stars that glimmered o'er them,  
Two or three,  
Set not ere they perished, woe is me !

## IV.

Scarcely seem they dead yet—  
Death is new ;  
See the petals red yet,  
Scent and dew,  
All as when in life they blushing grew.

## V.

Touch them yet I dare not  
While they show  
As if dead they were not ;  
Ah ! I know  
Dreams of life in death but madden woe.

## VI.

Let them lie and wither,  
As is right ;  
I may then steal hither  
In the night ;  
Find them wan and shrivelled in death's blight ;

## VII.

Gather each leaf slowly  
From its nook ;  
Hoard them up as holy  
In the Book  
Wherein Memory now for Hope must look.

## THE CYPRESS AND THE ROSES

ROSES and roses year by year  
Do I plant and cherish here,  
With many a wistful sigh and tear,  
Cradling new in the self-same bier  
Where the dead be.  
Hope and care and love betrayed !  
Blighted buds, they all, all fade  
In the constant deadly shade  
Of this cypress tree.

One black cypress shade will blight  
Myriads of roses of delight ;  
One stern cypress will outlast  
Ages of roses withering fast,  
Too well I see.  
What is left me now to do ?  
What, but sink at the dark root too ;  
Let the baleful gloom and rue  
Kill also me.

## MEETING AGAIN

Your eyes were burning with wild love and woe ;  
They seared my inmost heart :  
We knew, we knew too well that I must go,  
Yet could not bear to part.

We did not blame each other ; that worst gall  
Of common sin was spared ;  
Nor vindicate ourselves : confessing all,  
In silence each despaired.

One yearning overwhelmed all strength and hope,—  
That then and there we might  
Sink down, embracing, under heaven's cope,  
Engulfed in death's deep night.

And now again, after long bitter years,  
We are allowed to meet,  
And mingle henceforth all our sighs and tears  
While these two hearts shall beat :



I from that fearful world where I was cast  
    Among the multitude,  
To expiate the inexpiable Past  
    By constant doing good :

You from the sterner solitary life,  
    By woe and sin possessed,  
And waging with them constant deadly strife  
    Within thine own poor breast.

Ah ! can you really love me, whom you know  
    So weak and foul of yore ?  
Dear heart ! / feel that evil long-ago  
    But makes me love you more.

Yet still that longing almost swayeth me,—  
    That we should sink down deep,  
And side by side, from life's sore burthen free,  
    Sleep death's eternal sleep.

“ALLACE! THAT SAMYN  
SWEIT FACE!” \*

I.

“ALLACE! that samyn sweit face!”  
Bitter tears have drowned the shine  
Wont to laugh in azure eyne;  
Fear hath blanced the laughing lips,  
And they tremble trying to speak;  
Pain hath cast a wan eclipse  
On the round and rosy cheek;  
Grief hath greyed the locks; and how  
Care hath wrinkled that smooth brow!  
“Allace! that samyn sweit face!”  
Sweet then, yet sweeter now!

---

\* “In 1549 was printed at St. Andrews a curious work entitled ‘Vedderburn’s Complaynte of Scotlande,’ in which are preserved the titles of no less than thirty-seven songs.”—*The Book of Scottish Song*, by Alex. Whitelaw: Preface, p. v. Among the thirty-seven titles is this most pathetic one, “Allace! that samyn sweit face.”

II.

“ Allace ! that samyn sweit face ! ”  
 Eyes have lost the light of youth,  
 But have kept their loving truth ;  
 Lips that tremble while they speak  
     Speak the words that ravish me ;  
 And the forpined hollow cheek,  
     Oh, it breaks my heart to see !  
 Hair yet witnesseth a vow ;  
 Loyalty is on the brow :  
 “ Allace ! that samyn sweit face ! ”  
 Sweet then, yet sweetest now !

III.

“ Allace ! that samyn sweit face ! ”  
 Could one kindle up those eyes,  
 Think you, with a love-surprise ?  
 Could a rain of kisses turn  
     Those poor lips to bloom once more ?  
 Would those wan cheeks swell and burn  
     Fed with joys of heretofore ?  
 Would caressing hands allow  
 Not a furrow on that brow ?  
 “ Allace ! that samyn sweit face ! ”  
 Dear then, yet dearest now !

## A REQUIEM

THOU hast lived in pain and woe,  
Thou hast lived in grief and fear ;  
Now thine heart can dread no blow,  
Now thine eyes can shed no tear :  
    Storms round us shall beat and rave ;  
    Thou are sheltered in the grave.

Thou for long, long years hast borne,  
Bleeding through Life's wilderness,  
Heavy loss and wounding scorn ;  
Now thine heart is burdenless :  
    Vainly rest for ours we crave ;  
    Thine is quiet in the grave.

We must toil with pain and care,  
We must front tremendous Fate,  
We must fight with dark Despair :  
Thou dost dwell in solemn state,  
    Couched triumphant, calm and brave,  
    In the ever-holy grave.

## THE JOLLY VETERANS

COME rest, come rest, my leal old friends,  
Loll at ease round the old round table ;  
Now the sun descends and our duty ends,  
We'll have mirth as long as we're able.

### CHORUS.

'Then for all the rich blood we have ever outpoured  
Let us pour in the red wine fairly ;  
'Though our hands have warred till weak for the sword,  
'They can wield round the wine-cup rarely.

We have marched, we have fought, in the sweltry sun  
All the day since reveillé's blaring ;  
Now the march is done and the field is won  
We've a right to rest and good faring.

Then for all, &c.

See a rich warm light in the west still glows  
Though the sun has sunk before us,  
'Though the grey shades close on the earth's repose,  
And the black night gathers o'er us.

Then for all, &c.

Though our voices break as our songs we troll,  
Though our eyes and our limbs fail weary,  
Let each trusty soul have his pipe and his bowl,  
And the last few hours shall be cheery.

Then for all, &c.

Till the thick night wraps both the vale and the  
steep

Where through bad luck and good we fought  
fair, boys ;

Till we sink in the deep, in the long still sleep,  
Which shall drown all troubles and care, boys.

Then for all, &c.

And what reck we, when that sleep is out,

What may come with the dawn of the morrow ?

We shall rise fresh and stout, with the old hearts,  
no doubt,

To confront toil and danger and sorrow.

Then for all, &c.

## A CAPSTAN CHORUS

ROLLING along, bowling along,  
Over the seas we go ;  
And we heave up our anchor singing our song,  
With a Yeo, cheery men, yeo !  
Yeo, cheery men, yeo !

The wind and the waves they will beat us about,  
And the rocks lie a-waiting below ;  
But our yards they are trim and our timbers are  
stout ;  
Sing a Yeo, cheery men, yeo !  
Yeo, cheery men, yeo !

Monstrous and terrible growls the old sea  
When storms make his white rage grow ;  
Grim death lurks then in his heart for we ;  
But Yeo, cheery men, yeo !  
Yeo, cheery men, yeo !

For well are we nursed on his broad boon breast  
When his rage shall overblow,  
Fed full of the free bold life which is best ;  
Sing a Yeo, cheery men, yeo !  
Yeo, cheery men, yeo !

How he swings him along 'neath his ocean of air  
In his great heart's careless flow !  
How we win his love when his wrath we dare !  
Sing a Yeo, cheery men, yeo !  
Yeo, cheery men, yeo !

Rolling along, bowling along,  
Over the seas we go ;  
And we heave up our anchor singing our song,  
With a yeo, cheery men, yeo !  
Yeo, cheery men, yeo !



## TO A PIANISTE

I SAW thee once, I see thee now ;  
Thy pure young face, thy noble mien,  
Thy truthful eyes, thy radiant brow ;  
All childlike, lovely, and serene ;  
Rapt in harmonious visions proud,  
Scarce conscious of the audient crowd.

I heard thee when the instrument,  
Possessed and quickened by thy soul,  
Impassioned and intelligent,  
Responded to thy full control  
With all the treasures of its dower,  
Its sweetest and its grandest power.

I saw and heard with such delight  
As rarely charms our lower sphere :  
Blind Handel would not miss his sight,  
Thy beauty voiced thus in his ear ;  
Beethoven in that face would see  
His glorious unheard harmony.

## A RECUSANT

THE Church stands there beyond the orchard-  
blooms :

How yearningly I gaze upon its spire !  
Lifted mysterious through the twilight glooms,  
Dissolving in the sunset's golden fire,  
Or dim as slender incense morn by morn  
Ascending to the blue and open sky.  
For ever when my heart feels most forlorn  
It murmurs to me with a weary sigh,  
How sweet to enter in, to kneel and pray  
With all the others whom we love so well !  
All disbelief and doubt might pass away,  
All peace float to us with its Sabbath bell.  
Conscience replies, There is but one good rest,  
Whose head is pillowed upon Truth's pure breast

1858.

## A SERGEANT'S MESS SONG

WITH our arms round the waists of the charming  
girls,  
Through the galop-sweeps and the swift waltz-whirls,  
While our beards are brushed by their dancing curls,  
Dance, boys, dance !

With the old black pipe and the steaming glass,  
And a toast to the health of each sonsie lass,  
And a right jolly set the toast to pass,  
Drink, boys, drink !

For we have our hold of the world to-day,  
And must snatch our share of it while we may,  
Before they bury us out of the way :  
Dance, boys, dance !

So we'll smoke our pipe, and we'll drink our glass,  
And we'll play our game, and we'll hug our lass ;  
And as for the rest—why the devil's an ass :  
Drink, boys, drink !

## S O N N E T \*

THROUGH foulest fogs of my own sluggish soul,  
Through midnight glooms of all the wide world's  
guilt,  
Through sulphurous cannon-clouds that surge and  
roll  
Above the steam of blood in anger spilt ;  
Through all the sombre earth-oppressing piles  
Of old cathedral temples which expand  
Sepulchral vaults and monumental aisles,  
Hopeless and freezing in the lifeless land ;  
I gaze and seek with ever-longing eyes  
For God, the Love-Supreme, all-wise, all-good :  
Alas ! in vain ; for over all the skies  
A dark and awful shadow seems to brood,  
A numbing, infinite, eternal gloom :  
I tremble in the consciousness of Doom.

---

\* [Undated ; probably written in the sixties.]

## A CHANT

WHILE the trees grow,  
While the streams flow,  
While the winds blow,  
    We will be free !  
Free as trees growing,  
Free as streams flowing,  
Free as winds blowing,  
    Evermore free !

1857.

ON GEORGE HERBERT'S  
POEMS

What are these leaves dark-spotted and acerb?

“A very holy *herb*.”

To what good use may I this herb convert?

“Press it on thy soul's *hurt*.”

When *herb* unto the *hurt* I thus apply?

“*Herb-ert* is sanctity.”

## ON A BROKEN PIPE

NEGLECTED now it lies a cold clay form,  
So late with living inspirations warm :  
Type of all other creatures formed of clay—  
What more than it for Epitaph have they ?

## A PROEM

"Carouse in the Past."

ROBERT BROWNING'S *Saul*.

WE will drink anew of old pleasures ;  
In the golden chalice of song  
We will pour out the wine-like treasures  
Of memories hidden long.

Old memories, hidden but cherished,  
In a heart-nook deep and calm ;  
*They* have not faded and perished  
Like the old friends they embalm.

We will call them forth from their darkness  
As we call forth a rare old wine  
Which the long rich years have mellowed  
Till the flavour is divine.

In a glorious intoxication  
Will we revel while such drink may last ;  
And dead to the leaden-houred Present,  
Live in golden hours of the Past.



## NOTES



## NOTES

THOUGH it must be confessed that the present volume cannot compare with vol. i. (except as regards the section headed "Last Poems") in merit, yet I trust that few readers will neglect it on that account. Inferiority is a relative term, and though Thomson in the greater part of this volume is inferior to himself at his best, yet his work, even here, will compare favourably with that of many authors of established reputation. Everything printed here bears the stamp of the author's peculiar individuality; and I believe that there are very few of the pieces contained in this volume which those who really care for Thomson's work would be willing to lose. The volume will also be found to testify to what has sometimes been denied, viz., the versatility and variety of Thomson's poetical powers. I listen, I must confess, with a good deal of impatience to those critics, who assure us that Thomson's only title to remembrance is "The City of Dreadful Night." I trust that after the publication of these volumes we shall hear no more of such mistaken judgments.

"Good night! good night! how truly hath been sung"—p. 28.

The allusion here is to Shelley's "Good Night"—

"Good night?" No, love! the night is ill  
Which severs those it should unite;  
Let us remain together still,—  
That it will be *good* night."

*The Poet and his Muse*, p. 64.

To the original MS. of this poem the following note was appended: "Not true now, but true of seven songless years."

*At Belvoir*, p. 79.

This poem is a poetical record of a visit to Belvoir Castle, near Leicester, made by the poet in July 1881, in the company of hospitable friends. "Of the singular beauty of the poem," says Mr. Salt, "from a literary standpoint there can be little question; nothing more fresh and tender has been given us since Wordsworth's famous stanzas on 'Yarrow,' to which these seem to be poetically and spiritually akin."

*The Doom of a City*, p. 109.

When this poem was first published, the first part, describing "The Voyage," was omitted. My reason for this omission was that I feared that too many readers would be repelled by the somewhat uninteresting beginning, and would leave the remainder of the poem unread. Thomson himself was sensible that the first part was somewhat uninviting to the reader, and it was his intention to alter and condense it. However, it seems to be the right course now to print it in its entirety, for it contains some very characteristic touches, and is by no means destitute of fine lines and passages. The remainder of the poem will recompense the reader for any tedium he may have felt in reading Part I.

In a manuscript copy of this poem which the author presented to his friend, Mr. John Grant, there is an explanatory note appended to it, which must be quoted:—

"I call it a Fantasia, because (lacking the knowledge and power to deal with the theme in its epical integrity) I have made it but an episode in a human life, instead of a

chapter in the history of Fate. Thus it is throughout alloyed with the feelings and thoughts, the fantasies of the supposed narrator; and the verse has all the variableness and abrupt transitions of a man's moods, instead of the solemn uniformity of the laws of Fate.

"The City of the Statues is from the tale of Zobeide in the History of the Three Ladies of Bagdad and the Three Calenders. This episode and the account of the Kingdoms of the Sea in 'Prince Beder and ——,' impressed my boyhood more powerfully than anything else in the 'Arabian Nights.'

"The 'Voyage' is certainly tiresome: but a penny steam-boat will not carry one to a City where the people are all petrified,—not simply in soul and mind, but also in flesh and blood and bone."

In the copy of the poem which contains the above explanatory note, there are also a few notes written in pencil which seem to be worth preserving, and which I therefore print below—

" 'The chemistry of terror thus intense  
Burns them all lurid on the shrinking sense'—p. 139.

"De Quincey has a like simile in the 'Opium-Eater':—  
'The fierce chemistry of his dreams burns daily objects into insufferable splendour.'

" 'It is with swelling reverence dedicate'—p. 141.

"The dedication suggested by that of Bacon's 'Advancement of Learning.'

" 'I take thee, Misery, for my faithful Bride'—p. 143.

"See Shelley's 'Misery, a Fragment.'

" 'Their Æon is fulfilled'—p. 155.

"This is, I conceive, the true meaning of Æon, as de-

veloped in one of De Quincey's papers, 'On the Scriptural expression Eternity.'

" 'The stars for ever sweep through space, surrounding'—p. 176.

"[This chorus was] written in 1855: adopted here because something of the kind was wanted, and its existence hindered me from writing a new Chorus specially for this piece. It does not fit in precisely, and is the only bit of thus-adopted work."

*Ronald and Helen*, p. 191.

This poem is now printed for the first time. Though the story is not very interesting and not very well told (being in these respects a remarkable contrast to "Weddah and Om-el-Bonain"), I hope the reader will not pass it over without perusal. It contains many fine and well-wrought passages, and also some lyrics of much beauty. Moreover, those who are acquainted with the scenery of Jersey will derive much pleasure from the vivid descriptions of the island with which the poem abounds.

*A Festival of Life*, p. 286.

At the end of a copy of this poem which the author presented to Mr. Grant, I find the following note:—"I fear that you will find the above very turgid throughout ('The wreck of matter in the crash of words,' to improve Addison's notorious line); but the conception was so dithyrambic, and the stanza so long and elaborate, that I have not been able to tone down the diction."

*A Happy Poet*, p. 320.

This poem was connected in the author's mind, like the

piece which follows it, with "The Castle of Indolence."  
One of the MS. copies is headed thus :—

THE HAPPY POET :

FROM

The Castle hight of Indolence,  
And all the rich domain  
Which to that Castle and its Lord  
Doth ever appertain.

*Four Points in a Life*, p. 381.

The first of the four poems grouped under this title bears the date, it will be observed, of 1852. It is the earliest of Thomson's poems which has been preserved. Considering that it was written when the author was but eighteen years of age, it is a highly characteristic production. Few youths are afflicted, at that age, with a sense of their own unworthiness ; generally speaking most of them have only too good an opinion of their own merits.

*A Real Vision of Sin*, p. 391.

From the title and the author's note one would suppose that this gruesome satire was a parody on Tennyson's "Vision of Sin." This is not so, however, the piece really burlesqued being "The Two Voices," which is written in the same metre as the parody, and the subject of which is much the same. Though Thomson was not insensible to the excellence of Tennyson's poetic art, he had little or no respect for him as a thinker or ethical teacher.

*Robert Burns*, p. 406.

These lines are extracted from the article on Burns which I have mentioned in the Memoir. The verses are there

stated to be part of "a queer ode dedicated to him:" and after giving them the author adds: "The somewhat inebriate dithyrambist is perhaps right in seizing as the essential characteristics of Burns his vigorous strength and intense human or earthly sympathies."

*Siren's Song*, p. 414.

This lyric forms a portion of a romantic story called "Sarpalus of Mardon," which Thomson began but left uncompleted.

*To a Pianiste*, p. 431.

This poem was originally entitled "To Arabella Goddard," who was the artiste who inspired the verses.

**THE END.**



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